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MIRANDA;

A MIDSUMMER MADNESS.

BY

MORTIMER COLLINS.

VOL. II.

“ Why, this is very midsummer madness.

 * * * *

Though this be madness, yet there 's method in 't.”

—SHAKESPEARE.

LONDON: HENRY S. KING & CO.

65 CORNHILL AND 12 PATERNOSTER ROW.

1873.

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MIRANDA;

A MIDSUMMER MADNESS.



CHAPTER I.

THE HAPPY FAMILY.

“A party in a parlour.”

—WORDSWORTH.

THE Troglodyte surrendered Adam and Eve right willingly to the care of Miss Delisle; but he did not leave Sark, for he had heard of its wondrous sea-caverns tapestried with marine anemone, and with great gateways opening to wide stretches of sea and cliff. Singularly satisfied with Miss Delisle as an instructress of eccentric youth, he left his young folk under her care, and returned to the quiet little hotel, where the chief fare

was lobsters and rabbits and claret. He took leave of Miss Delisle and the youngsters, at first intending to return at once to England ; but, as he sat that evening over his wine, and saw the full moon sink yellow, leaving silver paths along the sea that might have been made for angel-princesses, and meditated on the caverns he had heard of, and the delicious isolation and uncivilisation, he thought he would stay a day or two. Whether he thought of anything else, who can say ?

Anyway, he settled down awhile. Messrs Sherwood had his directions. His sole desire as to the estate and baronetcy was to see justice done ; he was only too glad to dwell quietly in a corner. So he stayed quietly at Madame Vaudin's, and wandered everywhere, and thoroughly enjoyed himself.

Meanwhile Miss Delisle's six pupils were shaking down into a reasonable state. It is probably a pity that the eccentricities of nature should be crushed out ; but regular people are the majority ; irregular people, unless very strong, must suffer. Unrestrained Susanna would have made a capital Semira-

mis or Catherine ; Dick, a Garibaldi ; Fred and Ellen, a couple of dubious creatures ; Adam and Eve, good hardy simple regenerators of the race to whom sea was as much a home as land. It may easily be imagined that these six young people were a queer human menagerie ; but the clever keeper of these wild creatures left them alone as much as was safe, and found that, with slight restraint, they gradually civilised each other. Adam and Eve brought into the place a thoroughly healthy influence. They were sound, and only wanted to be controlled and guided. They did much to bring the others into a reasonable state.

As thus : Susanna was taming Dick, and Dick exhausting Susanna ; whence it seemed likely that in time both would behave like sensible people. Still they had occasional outbreaks. Moreover, Dick, a fierce little villain, was particularly fond of playing tricks on the unfortunate Fred and Ellen. Though several years older than he, these helpless twins were afraid of him ; and when the despot was away, the rebel would plague them unmercifully. When Adam and Eve became

Miss Delisle's pupils, he tried the same experiment on them ; but the peirastic attempt was a failure at the first, for Adam dropt him into a deep sea-pool, and did not haul him out till his mouth was filled with salt water. The next thing was that Susanna endeavoured to make Eve understand that she was an inferior person to be under the despot's orders. Eve laughed at her—Susanna attempted to box her ears ; but the lissom little islander sprang on her, threw her on the sands, and compelled her humbly to apologise. Questionless, it did both these young fools good to be mastered. It would do this English nation good to be mastered. But when again shall we see a master of men ?

Fred and Ellen were otherwise influenced. These timorous and torpid creatures were smitten with envy and amaze when they saw Adam and Eve swim a mile out to sea, or climb the perpendicular face of a rock. They woke up. They began to get tired of each other. Fred had thought Ellen perfect, and Ellen, Fred ; now Fred looked lovingly at Eve, and Ellen still more lovingly at Adam. There was not much reciprocity, for the two

Azorians were quite too healthily young to understand the scrofulous precocity of their admirers. So when Fred made love to Eve, she took up the first stick she could find, and drubbed him ; while, when Ellen made love to Adam, and became uncomfortably pertinacious, he tied her to a tree and left her.

With all their ineradicable wildness, Miss Delisle found Adam and Eve much more capable of development than either of her other pupils. They took to thought as bravely as they took to the sea. Strong by nature, they recognised a greater strength than their own—it is your weak people who cannot obey, who defy God and the King, and the constable and the schoolmaster. Miss Delisle tempted these two children to learn things which their unique life would cause them to like to learn ; very soon they showed curiosity insatiable. They had the same thirst for knowledge as they had for catching fish and birds. They liked the excitement. Any new thing, as men said in Astu. When once Adam and Eve began to learn, their pace was tremendous. They left the torpid Fred and Ellen leagues behind. Miss Delisle feared

they would move too fast for her. For Adam took to mathematics magnificently, while Eve had a passion for language ; and they followed their favourite fancy just as resolutely as they were wont to follow wild creatures on the Island of Hawks.

The Troglodyte could not tear himself away from the marvellous caverns of Sark. For some time Miss Delisle and the children thought he had left the island ; but in so small a sea-surrounded space, it cannot be very long before you meet the man you would rather not meet. Of course, therefore, the time came when Gilbert Tachbrook's presence on the island became known to Miss Delisle. He met her in one of his strolls, and acknowledged that he had been trying to tear himself away, but found the place too pleasant.

“ Why hurry yourself ? ” she asked. “ You are too old to be a pupil of mine, but the sea and sky will take you as pupils. You have nothing to do.”

“ Indeed I have,” he replied ; “ and one reason why I stay here is to avoid doing it. I have a lot of tiresome business, and ought to be in London to transact it. I stay here

to avoid interviews and correspondence. But never mind me, Miss Delisle ; I am incorrigible. How are the children ?”

“ They are not at all incorrigible, I am glad to say. They are my best and brightest and most amusing pupils. They have interested me so much that I really fear I have not done justice to the others. Indeed, Mary Booth, who is rather jealous of them, told me something of the kind the other day, for which I sent her supperless to bed.”

“ Your discipline seems severe. Do you mean to keep your husband in as good order ?”

“ I don’t intend to have such an incumbrance.”

While the Troglodyte stayed in Sark he often dropped in at Miss Delisle’s to see his children and her. He was astonished at the marvellous improvement of Adam and Eve. He was amused by the endless duel between Dick and Susanna, neither of whom seemed finally capable of conquering the other. They were growing gradually more quiet, but at intervals there was an outbreak. Dick would kick Susanna’s legs, and she would retaliate

with smart slaps. But these explosions became rarer, since, when they occurred, Miss Delisle impartially punished both parties.

Gilbert Tachbrook was also greatly amused by the flabbiness of Fred and Ellen. They had improved by contact with Adam and Eve ; but they were still creatures of dull intellect and feeble fibre. Neither kindness nor severity had any definite effect on them. Scolded or punished, they sulked. Miss Delisle confessed that they were the worst specimens she had ever had. Indeed, sulky people are the most abominable nuisances of intimate association. They can be kept in order by the pedagogue, who should lash them severely with his knottiest whipcord ; but in a state of independence, they become such an abomination, that an Act of Parliament is wanted to put them down.

Somehow or other the Troglodyte stayed at Sark very much longer than he at first intended. His notion was to wander awhile ; for, being a man of wide experience, he full well knew that much time must pass before Messrs Sherwood had any information for him. He was in no hurry. It was clear that

the claimant of the baronetcy was not Harold Tachbrook ; but it was not at all clear how that negative could be proved. So he thought he might leave Adam and Eve behind him, and go round the world : but he did not do it.

What reason had he for this change of procedure ? Caverns, it must be remembered, were singularly attractive to him ; besides he would naturally be anxious as to the education of his children. Sufficing reasons, surely ; yet may it be doubted whether they were the true ones. No ; the fact is, that Gilbert Tachbrook was fascinated by the rare style of beauty and the high mental qualities possessed by Margaret Delisle ; an unconscious fascination at first, which, in course of time, grew definite and determinate. He laughed at himself for it ; tried indeed to laugh himself out of it. Gravely did he argue with himself that he surely had performed his matrimonial duty to the world ; that Adam and Eve were children enough to possess, and quite as troublesome as need be ; still his fancy reverted to this dark-eyed lady, so quiet, so pleasant, so resolute, so wise. Did she think of him at all ? It

seemed unlikely. She appeared completely absorbed in her occupations. She was always glad to see him, certainly ; and down on the sands by the Chapelle de Mauves they had many an afternoon stroll when the young folk were enjoying themselves under the care of Miss Mary Booth. Nominal care, so far as Adam and Eve were concerned ; for their young heads might be seen above the water half a mile away. The other couples were sometimes troublesome, either two by stupidity or mischief.

“ Those children live in the sea,” said the Troglodyte to Miss Delisle, as they came swimming homewards one sunny evening, their pretty curly heads touched by soft glints of saffron light.

“ Ah ! ” she said, “ I quite envy them. I never saw the sea in my youth, and now I am a little afraid of it. I wish I could swim.”

“ Shall I teach you ? ” asked the Troglodyte. “ The sea is a faithful friend to those who love and trust it. When will you have a lesson ? ”

“ It is my business to give lessons, not to take them,” she said, with a laugh.

CHAPTER II.

HAROLD TACHBROOK AT ROTHESCAMP.

“Beatus ille, qui procul negotiis
Ut prisca gens mortalium,
Paterna rura bobus exercet suis
Solutus omni fenore.”

HAROLD TACHBROOK having been a fortunate man so far as money is concerned, and indeed in most other matters, could gratify his tastes more, and do what he deemed his duties. Those duties, in his idea, were threefold: to his father, Dr Septimus, to Miranda, and to Rothescamp, the village of his ancestors. The old Doctor's state of mind caused one to recollect the quaint couplet—

“The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
Lets in new light through chinks that time has made.”

There was a curious blend of logic and superstition in his character, the latter

doubtless developed by the magnetism of Sobieska. His chief pleasure was in the company of his son and his son's daughter. To sit at noon under the great plane-tree in that quaint old garden, with Miranda to chatter to him, or to read him fragments of his favourite poets and essayists, was perfect delight. Miranda began to get deeper knowledge of literature from the Doctor's remarks. As the wind made susurrus in the broad-leaved plane—

“Such tents the patriarchs loved”—
it was pleasant to hear Miranda's musical voice uttering choice gems of perfect English verse, while her grandfather showed her their significance. They became great friends, these two: and surely nothing can be prettier than the friendship between an old man and a young girl specially of the same race. Read Mr Locker's charming poem, “Grandmamma”—compare it with Leslie's picture, which it suggested—and then reflect a little upon Darwinism and the continuity of the human race.

“Thou deity in paint !
What canon says I mayn't
Marry thee?”

If you are lucky enough to have ancestors and portraits of them, look through the gallery; make acquaintance with people, centuries old, who might be your twin-brothers or twin-sisters — whom Pythagoras haply might say were indeed yourselves. How would you have acted fighting at Creçi or flirting at the Court of Charles? When somebody asked the inimitable epigrammatist of Bilbilis how he would act if he were rich, Martial retorted with the question—If you were a lion what sort of a lion would you be?

Doctor Septimus saw in his pretty ocean-born grand-daughter the sort of girl that his sisters were, many long years ago. She brought him back a fragment of his youth. He remembered, the erudite octogenarian, the days when he was eight, eighteen, twenty-eight. To some men old age is melancholy: those are the men who regret the past and distrust the future. Not of such mould was Dr Septimus Tachbrook. As he approached the end of life he felt a renewal of youth. He was about to be born into a new world. He had reached his second

boyhood ; and the boy who had left the world behind him discovered his identity with the boy who many a year ago had all the world before him. He often imagined himself a youngster again, with a lovely girl of Miranda's type to make him amorous.

The Doctor's intercourse with his son was of another character. It usually took form at evenglome, under the plane, with accompaniment of the weed. There was rather a disagreement between them. Dr Tachbrook's strong mind, naturally logical, had been turned out of its groove by his wife's influence, and he had no end of odd ideas, which could be based only on something superautpraeternatural. Now Harold, though he had knocked much about the world, meeting many strange adventures, strange coincidences, was not so imaginative as his father, or so willing to admit the possibility of any deflection in the current of events. This difference between the old and the middle-aged is like unto the difference between the young and the middle-aged. The child is fresh from God's hand ; the old man is going soon into God's presence. One smells the fragrance and

hears the music of the land whence he came ; the other feels in like fashion the delight and beauty of the land whereto he returns. The man of middle age, middle ideas, middle ambitions, toils wearily along the dusty roads of life, and cannot remember the beginning, and cannot imagine the end. Hence, though Harold Tachbrook was not by any means a dull or unimaginative man, it is a fact that he could not understand either his father or his daughter half so well as they understood each other.

Human griefs happily fade. Miranda in due time was not quite so miserable about Tom Jones. Her temperament was a mixture of faith and fear. When a month had passed, she went on quietly enough, and was well pleased to be her grandfather's companion at one time, and her father's at another. But she had alternate fits, sanguine and desperate, in one whereof she would imagine Tom Jones coming gaily home to her ; in another five fathoms deep, alongside of multitudinous drenched relics of earth. But gradually the general tone of her life grew gay and bright, and she unconsciously

accepted her destiny. Tom Jones was lost, she thought ; well, she must await some other form of fortune. Another Tom Jones was of course unimaginable—only one such man could possibly exist. So Miranda resolved to wear the willow as resolutely as the classic poet who sang—

“ *Omne circa petasum salicem gero viridem ;
Per annos circa petasum, et unam diem plus.* ”

She resolved to forget all amorous ideas ; to devote her young life to her father and grandfather ; to be an excellent young person, devoid of selfishness, and eager to do good in her generation. It may be deemed rather a come-down for a child born at sea to take up with these worn-out follies of the land. Fancy silver-footed Thetis member of a school-board !

Harold Tachbrook, a restless spirit always, had not enough to occupy him with his father and his daughter, but must needs think of doing his duty to his neighbours. An unexpected windfall of money had reached him, and he was so foolish as to imagine that his old neighbours ought to partake his good fortune. What shall I do for Rothescamp ?

was one of his first thoughts. He saw the village in a very dull and neglected state. The parson was a young gentleman who, according to his bucolic parishioners, preached in petticoats all over crosses. He was one of those foolish lovers of ceremony who are doing their best to disestablish the Church of England. Without irreverence to the sacerdotal order, it may be suggested that if the bishop were empowered to authorise churchwardens to administer to these young clerical babies a dozen stripes with a birch rod, it would do a deal of good. The tendency to make one's self ridiculous is never more dangerous than when it infects ecclesiastics.

Harold Tachbrook, as in duty bound, consulted first this parson, the Reverend Florence Langridge, but found that he did not possess an idea. So he left him to his gesticulations and genuflexions, and tried the second power in the parish, the landlord of the "Tachbrook Arms." That worthy—known in the neighbourhood as Gaffer Wiggins, though very inferior to his predecessor, Tom Ockit—was a prosperous fellow;

indeed, as he had reached the weight of twenty-five stone, he wanted to retire as soon as anybody was willing to buy the lease of his house and the goodwill of his business.

Harold bought both. He found in London a canny Scot named Macliver (the *i* is long, and the name was Lord Clyde's), who in his lifetime had edited newspapers, managed hotels, promoted companies, taken photographs, and a hundred other things. Alexander Macliver, known for euphony as Sandy Mac, was quite willing to become landlord of the "Tachbrook Arms" on Harold Tachbrook's conditions. These terms were: to receive a good salary, and to implicitly obey orders. Sandy Mac justified by his behaviour Harold Tachbrook's judgment of his character. Harold at once transmuted the "Tachbrook Arms" into a village club. He turned out all the vile liquids in the place, and it is to be feared a few fish in the river Rothe were poisoned. He had good ale, home-brewed; good wine and spirits at reasonable prices; and an ordinary every day for working-men at sixpence a head. It was a famous sixpenny-worth. The Rothescamp

folk, whose best dinner of the week was a slice of "pigstye beef" and an onion, were amazed at the dinner they could get for sixpence. The ale they did not like at first; the taste for strychnine and salt and *coccus indicus* is not easily eradicable. Malt and hops resumed their ancient supremacy in time. Thanks to Liberal Governments and Free Trade principles, the taste of malt is unknown to the majority of the Queen's subjects.

The club at the "Tachbrook Arms" answered admirably. Of course it took some little time to develop; for there is nothing more difficult than to move that glorious obstinacy which has made the English the first race in the world. Mr Matthew Arnold plaintively ejaculates that the English aristocracy are slow to imbibe ideas. He does not see two things—that all Englishmen are one aristocracy, and that to absorb ideas slowly, yet surely, is better than to intoxicate yourself with ideal alcohol.

Harold Tachbrook did not leave the manipulation of his ideas entirely to Sandy Mac. Few days passed that he did not join the

company at the “Tachbrook Arms” at one o’clock, and pay sixpence for his dinner. Faith, it was hard work to digest so much meat and cabbage and potato at such an hour ; but Harold had brought *dura ilia* from Australia, and was willing to eat two dinners a-day for the regeneration of his countrymen. And his presence at the inn soon brought custom. The dinner became an institution.

This was not by any means Harold Tachbrook’s sole act of generosity to Rothescamp. He woke up the young people in every way. He started a cricket-club, which quickly brought into work the young fellows who, for want of amusement, had been previously drinking abominable beer, and smoking what cannot be called tobacco. He set up a reading-room at the “Tachbrook Arms,” and supplied plentiful newspapers, and a few sensibly amusing books, and admitted every one who liked to come on payment of one farthing. Farthings became a coin in demand at Rothescamp-in-the-Valley.

Harold Tachbrook’s long absence from England had made him all the more desirous to supply English folk with enjoyment and

comfort. His great delight was Saturday, when, from time immemorial, Rothescamp people had taken half the day. This he encouraged. At one he left Dr Septimus in Miranda's care, and went down to the "Tachbrook Arms," and carved and ate and drank. "By Jove," he one day said to a friend, "I never ate so much vegetable substance in so short a time." Then came cricket; and rather to his own surprise, he found he could bowl as well as he did in his hot youth. His was the fast underhand style, and it did damage. Cricket over, our friend went home to dine; but on these Saturdays he returned early to the hostelry, leaving his father and daughter to amuse each other, while he told the villagers some quaint story of travel; and the evening ended with a dance. Once or twice Dr Septimus himself deigned to flatter his son's fancy, and came down and discoursed with leisurely eloquence to the peasantry, telling them some story of his past life. Possibly they did not to the uttermost fathom all that he said, or all the words he used, but they thoroughly understood the kindness of his coming; they looked reverently on the

tall figure and keen face of the ancient aristocratic physician. He dropt apophthegms in monosyllables, and some of these villagers contrived to pick them up. Sesquipedalian stuff breaks before it touches ground.

After the lecture came the dance ; and, strange to say, my lovely Miranda disdained not to join therein ; nor was she coy in choice of partners. Thereby she did much good. The youthful villagers began to cultivate courtesy and cleanliness. Miranda was worshipped. The villageresses were terribly jealous at first ; but when they saw her move among them with the perfect dignity that knows no pride, and treat their sweethearts with an easy courtesy that implies no condescension, they began to understand. Miranda grew to be the Lady of Rothescamp-in-the Valley.

She was happy. She delighted to please her grandfather, and her father, and the Rothescamp people. *But where was Tom Jones?*

CHAPTER III.

THE PALINOURA.

“Οἱ ποντοναῦται τῶν ταλαιπώρων βροτῶν,
Οἵσ οὔτε Δαίμων οὔτε τις Θεῶν νέμων
Πλοῦτόν ποτ’ ἀν νείμειεν ἀξίαν χάριν.”

WHAT happened to our friend Tom Jones, the adventurous? Caught in the paddle-wheel, he had to dive so low to clear the steamer that she started without him. Away she splashed, merrily enough. Tom threw himself on his back for rest, and wondered how soon they would discover his disappearance. He fully expected to see the steamer come back in search of him, but nothing of the kind occurred, and she gradually passed out of sight; and Tom, burdened with cloth-

ing, grew tired, and resolved to swim for the island. Even this was too much for him. The weather was hot, his clothes over-weighted him, and he was striking out fiercely in despair, when he heard a tremendous shout from an obviously English throat—

“ Come on board, my man ! Look sharp !”

Tom, almost faint with over-toil, found himself alongside a vessel of curious shape. He was not in condition to criticise it ; indeed he was only too glad to scramble up the side. They undressed him, and put him into a hammock, and administered brandy. He slept a dreamless sleep of exhaustion till next morning. When he awoke he was not neglected. A boy came with coffee and biscuits—the coffee dashed with cognac. He refreshed himself, and fell again asleep, worn out by his hard work.

At noon he felt restless ; got out of his hammock, dressed—for fresh clothes had been prepared for him—went on deck. When he came to the surface, he was amazed at the curious craft on board which he found himself. It was rushing through the water at a tremendous pace. It was propelled by steam, but there

was neither screw nor paddles. These points Tom Jones noticed as he came on deck ; but he was immediately accosted by the steward of the yacht, who took him aft. There he found its owner, a tall slight young gentleman, with light hair that fell to his shoulders, and a moustache of the softest kind.

“ The gentleman we picked up, my lord,” said the steward.

“ Very glad to see you all right again,” said the young gentleman, coming forward with the easy frankness of the better sort. “ I am running a race against time—perhaps you have made me lose it.”

“ I hope not,” said Tom.

“ You are not up to the mark yet, I can see,” said the yachtsman. “ Steward, get this gentleman some breakfast. To save trouble, how shall I call you ? I am Lord Tixover ; my friends irreverently call me Tix.”

“ I am Tom Jones,” said Tom.

“ Capital name ! got it in three volumes in my cabin. Call me Tix, and I ’ll call you Tom. Have something to eat and drink, then we ’ll smoke and spin a yarn or two. By Jove, I ’m devilish glad I picked you up.”

“ So am I,” said Tom, whom the steward just then supplied with an appetising mutton-chop, slightly flavoured with Nepaul pepper, and a pint bottle of Madeira. Tom was himself again.

“ Now,” said Lord Tixover, “ let us have a smoke. Stewart, find some pipes. This is tobacco the Sultan gave me—rather mild, but not altogether bad.”

They sat in the stern and smoked in silence for some time. By and by Tixover said—

“ How in the world did you come to be swimming where we picked you up ? ”

Tom explained.

“ How unlucky ! Your friends will think you lost. I am obliged to go ahead, for I have made a tremendously heavy bet to go round the world in a hundred days. If I haven’t to pick up many drowning men, I shall win.”

“ I am very unfortunate,” said Tom. “ Tachbrook, who has been a father to me, and his daughter, whom I hoped to marry, will both think I am dead. I might as well have been drowned.”

"Pooh!" quoth Tixover. "Don't talk nonsense. I knew the Tachbrooks."

"You do?"

"Of course I do. I know everybody. Don't you know the crest of the family—a cat, and the motto, '*Three times three.*' They have all nine lives, like a cat. Tachbrook is supposed to be a corruption of Cats' brook—so called because the cats of the family caught trout there. If your sweetheart's a Tachbrook, she'll be waiting for you when you reach England with me. I shall expect a kiss for bringing you safely home."

Tom laughed, cheered by the Viscount's voluble fun.

"Let's forget these temporary annoyances," said Tixover. "Look here, Tom! You've been in Australia since you were a boy: have you had any adventures?"

"None."

"Never been shot at, or knocked down, or skinned alive?"

"Never."

"By Jove," said Tix, "you're a living proof of what I always say—that there's no place like England for adventures. I've

had thousands. When I left college, I made up my mind to go in for defending women who were in any difficulty or trouble. I started a society ; found the money ; gave a secretary five hundred a year, which he spent principally on ballet-girls—doubtless thinking that was an object of the society. As for me, I traversed England to and fro in search of distressed damsels ; and I assure you I rescued a lot of them. I got dreadfully laughed at. The morning papers were only too pleased to make fun of a lord ; but I cared nothing, for I knew I was doing good. However, one can't always be going over the same ground. I happened to be asked to stay at Goodwood during the races ; and when I left the Duke's I went over to Bognor for some bathing. I hired a boatman called Boniface, and we went out lobster-fishing. Boniface was a close observer of nature ; he used to show me the lobster swimming forward when at leisure—backward when in haste. The idea occurred to me that we ought to take a lesson from the lobster. I rushed up to town ; found a deuced clever engineer of my acquaintance, a pupil of

Brunel's, called Wakefield ; got him away to dine with me in the Albany.

“‘Wakefield,’ said I, when dinner was over, and he was enjoying the best bottle of claret my man could find in the cellar, ‘do you think you could build me a two-hundred-ton lobster?’

“He evidently thought me mad ; but when I explained my idea, he jumped at it. So I gave him *carte blanche*, and he built this yacht—the *Palinoura*. You have not yet seen its action. Let us go for ‘ard.”

Tom Jones perceived that the yacht was propelled by a mighty tail, just like that of the lobster, which caught the water and let it go again. A slight movement reversed the engine, and then the yacht went at an easy pace in the opposite direction. She had been modelled to precisely resemble a lobster, all but the claws.

Tom Jones was astonished and delighted. The idea was evidently a good one, for Lieutenant Nolan, Tixover's captain, was quite certain the wager would be won. Indeed, the little craft flew far faster through the water than the *Mighty Metropolis*.

The Viscount and Tom Jones cronied excellent well. When they put into Melbourne for a few hours to get fresh stores and coal, Tom looked up Mrs Brown ; that worthy old lady became quite hysterical over his misadventures. As to Tom, it was delicious for him to walk through the rooms where his Miranda had lived from her babyhood. He wondered whether she, at the other side of the world, could, by any intuition, know that he was in that house so haunted by her memory ? Poor Tom ! He *was* in love. He pictured her pretty fingers arranging flowers in the vases, as they had done a thousand times before. He saw her graceful form at the window, with a merry smile at the oddities of Melbourne life. He fancied he could smell the flower that blushed on her bosom.

Tixover allowed Tom scanty time for sentiment. Off started the *Palinoura* again, to round the Cape of Good Hope. It is not necessary to follow the flight of the insect ship with any minuteness. Storms caught her at the Cape, and she was driven many leagues southward ; but she was staunch, and

did her work well. Wakefield knew how to build, and Nolan how to navigate. She beat the sea and the wind, and won her match against time.

Tixover and Tom Jones, living so long on board ship together—about long enough for a bill at three months to become due—got remarkably intimate. They had just those points of contact and divergence which make men friends. You cannot have for friend a man too like yourself, or too unlike. An unlike likeness is the base of friendliness. Tix and Tom were both adventurous; both ready to dare anything for fun; both capable of enjoying life with that royal gaiety which makes mere dissipation impossible. But Tom was a man with fixed ideas; whereas the Viscount had a new notion every day, and ran after it as you may see an entomologist run after a butterfly, net in hand, on a summer day in the country. There was a new butterfly every hour to tempt Tixover.

Tom, you may be sure, told him his story; told him, indeed, that secret which previously had been confided to Miranda only.

“You are a lucky fellow,” says Tix. “Your

life's a romance. Your sweetheart's a queen. I envy you. I shall try to cut you out. You've got a secret, too—I wish I had a secret. Hang it! there ought to be that sort of thing in all good old families."

"You had better leave a mystery to your heir," said Tom.

"Capital notion! Murder somebody, and bury him"—

"Or her!"

"Ah! yes—*her*. Bury her in the wine-cellar. Fearful groans heard from the farthest binn. Pooh! I am talking nonsense—a thing excusable on a moonlight night at sea. But I can't make a secret—and you've got one, you villain. I envy you."

"All very well, Tix; but when I tell my secret—as I must—there's an end of the romance."

"Ah! but see what a lot of fellows you'll astonish. You'll have ten minutes of rapture, at any rate. That's what I like. Life is slow. Crush me a hundred years into five minutes, and I'll take my century at a gulp."

CHAPTER IV.

STILL AT SEA.

“ Old ocean, how thy laughter multitudinous,
Long, long ago, well sung by mighty Æschylus,
Gladdens the ear of whoso knows thy mysteries !
Deep in thy depths invisible what creatures dwell
In coral halls, amid stupendous forest-growth,
Guarded by giant fish, to whom the elephant
Would seem a tiny creature, fit for Lilliput.”

The Comedy of Dreams.

LIFE at sea is a great test and trial of human character. Commonly it is found that men who go on a long voyage, determined to occupy their leisure wisely, become inveterately indolent, and pass their time in eating, drinking, smoking, and, if there is the opportunity, flirting. Good resolutions are blown away by the breeze that fills the sails, and they come very soon to that lotos-eating stage which has been described on board the *Mighty Metropolis*.

Not in this way did Lord Tixover spend his time on board his favourite *Palinoura*—this last toy of his fertile imagination which was now fulfilling his prophetic instinct. His day was a long one. Up at sunrise or soon after, he began the morning with a tour of inspection round the yacht, receiving a report as to the way she had made during the night. Tom soon came to join him in this matutinal circuit, and was always much amused at the Viscount's enthusiasm when he went forward and watched his lobster's mighty tail grasping the water. After this, they breakfasted and smoked a cigar : then Tix, the weather being fine (and they had a curiously fine voyage) would get astern amid cushions and rugs, and have his writing materials brought from below, and occupy his restless mind for hours together. Tom Jones, who in the bush had learnt to handle bridle-rein, lasso, revolver, or boomerang, but not that more delicate, yet sometimes more dangerous implement, the pen, begged to see what Tixover wrote, and was amazed by its inexhaustible variety. Ideas seem to come to him as readily as foam to the waves. He blew intellectual bubbles all

day long. He kept a diary of the voyage, every now and then putting in a pen-and-ink sketch illustrative. Tom found caricatures of himself and of everybody on board among these croquis. Again, the Viscount had a romance in hand, with a plot so complex and characters so abnormal that nothing in the world could surpass it. Moreover, he wrote verses . . . easy pleasant patrician verses that did not pretend to be poetry, yet were far better than much that does. He was writing essays, too, on questions of English social life ; . . . not political questions, which he abhorred, being of opinion that government by party was most injurious to our intellectual and material progress. Besides all this, he had a fancy for architecture, and was perpetually designing all manner of buildings, from castle to cottage, from minster to theatre. Then there was a touch of chemistry about him, and he sometimes had a morning with alembics and crucibles and retorts ; and one day nearly blew Tom Jones overboard when passing a stream of chlorine through ammonia. Finally, as regards my list, though not finally, by any means, as regards the

Viscount's fancies, he had a mathematical craze, and firmly believed that he had carried the interpretation of $\sqrt{-1}$ a step farther than Peacock or Gregory or De Morgan.

Much of this was unintelligible utterly to Tom Jones . . . whose scholastic knowledge was that of an imperfectly educated school-boy, and whose wild life in Australia had naturally left him quite ignorant of the questions which men of the world discuss in the cities of Europe. What he did understand both amused and instructed him ; he had a robust, but not a subtle or even an acute intellect. Anything within the sphere of what we call common sense was intelligible to Tom Jones, and he could decide upon it promptly. Tixover was much delighted with his comments on those social essays already mentioned. His fresh unwarped way of looking at things, born of a brain unclouded by city smoke, and of a long intellectual quietude, charmed the Viscount. These mornings, where one scribbled and the other criticised, passed very pleasantly.

There was luncheon about one . . .

served on deck when possible. Afterwards the weed and chat . . . intermingled with attempts to catch fish, or shoot birds. The *Palinoura* travelled too fast for much success in either way. Tom shot an albatross. One foggy afternoon some flying-fish leapt on deck, and were found uncommonly good at dinner. Dinner was usually at eight, and Nolan generally joined them . . . a welcome guest, being a thorough gentleman of the maritime type, and a spinner of splendid yarns. After dinner, which was lazily prolonged, a stroll on deck . . . where they smoked and chatted, and watched the great procession of the stars, while a nautical member of the crew played the key-
bugle at intervals.

This bugler, by the way, old Sam Witney, was a real oddity, and one day spun the yarn of his life, for the amusement of their honours. To give his way of telling it would be impossible; a summary must suffice. He was brought up for a blacksmith by his father, a stern disciplinarian, who generally used a hammer as instrument of punishment. "That's why my skull have got so main

thick," says Sam. 'Sam always liked music, which his father hated ; he played all sorts of instruments he could get at, from the jew's harp upwards ; by and by, he was engaged to play the bassoon in the village choir, in days ere organs had reached country villages. His sire, a "methody," was enraged at this ; enraged still more, when Sam was known to "keep company" with the parish schoolmaster's daughter. So there was a quarrel unappeasable ; off runs Sam and lists for a "soger," gets appointed bugler to his company—spends a few happy years in a red coat. By and by, the old blacksmith dies intestate : Sam is advertised for ; a few hundred pounds enable him to buy his discharge, and do what he likes. Back goes Sam to his native village to look for the schoolmaster's daughter : alas, she has married a scoundrel who keeps a public-house, and drinks all the profits, and starves her and her children. Her old sweetheart gives her, on the sly, a couple of ten pound notes, and then makes up his mind to try a seafaring life. So he ships on board the *Arethusa* frigate, and soon learns his business, and

graduates A.B. "And then your honour,—my Lord, I mean," he continued, "when the Capen here wanted a crew, why, I'd just been paid off, and I thought I'd like to go to sea in such a wonderful queer craft."

Such was Sam Witney the bugler's story, one of many yarns that were spun on moonlit nights: for Tix liked to make friends of his crew . . . as indeed, he made friends of everybody.

It was odd to note the varieties of these stories. One man had seen a ghost. Another had been in love. Another had been left on a desert island. Another had been captured by pirates. Tix made memoranda of all these stories in his diary.

"If they are true," he said to Tom, "they are instructive: if untrue, they at least show the imaginative faculty at work among minds of no culture. The imagination is the greatest of human endowments, and so few of us know how to use it. When a great orator, political or religious, knows how to act on the universal imagination, he may change the whole current of human affairs. What wonderful work was done by the men who preached the Crusades."

“ It’s no use talking history to me,” said Tom, frankly, “ for I never learnt any, and it is rather too late to begin ; but I quite agree with you about the power of the imagination, for I have imagined the most wonderful things, when I have been alone on those Australian plains.”

“ Ay,” quoth Tix, “ solitude is the nurse of imagination ; see how superstitious sailors are.”

“ I like your thorough English seaman,” said Tom, “ he is always ready to fight or make love . . . two fine propensities.”

“ You go home to do the latter,” said Tix. “ Don’t you wish we were in Falmouth Bay, and could telegraph your safety to your lady-love ? ”

“ Don’t I ? Sanguine as I am, old fellow, I should have been as melancholy as a gibbon, if your inexhaustible spirits had not kept me going. I have thought of Miranda making herself wretched because she believed me to be drowned . . . and then I have thought of her listening to some other fellow.” . . .

“ You infamous heretic ! ” cried Tix, “ you rascally unbeliever in the perfection of

woman! Why, if I had a Miranda (I wish I had), do you think I could doubt her for as long a time as it takes the *Palinoura* to travel an inch? I am ashamed of you, Tom. Miranda will not weep too much, I hope; her friends will cheer her into a wise belief that you are safe somewhere. Egad, sir, if I were going home with such a prospect, wouldn't I swear at the *Palinoura* for being slow?"

"You are a capital consoler, Tix," said Tom Jones.

The day came when they sighted Pendennis Castle, and ran into the lovely bay whence all steamers going eastward will start in years to come. Two telegrams went from Falmouth as soon as Tix and Tom could reach the office.

"TIXOVER, Falmouth, to PRICE RODEN,
Princes Gate.

"Round the world in 96 days,
7 hours, 15 minutes, 43 seconds."

"TOM JONES, Falmouth, to HAROLD TACH-BROOK, Rothescamp.

"I am safe, and will be with you to-morrow."

“Now,” said Tixover, “let us dine. I have one idea in my head. I have been round the world on a lobster, so a lobster will I have for dinner. And I’ll make him into a *mayonnaise* with Devonshire cream—we must call it Cornish here; and we’ll drink the cider of the country tempered with cognac. What say you, Tom?”

“Faith, I say yes, and the sooner the better.”

“All right. Come along.”

Tixover, a practical man, walked straight into the hotel kitchen; made love to Mary Tregelles the cook; sent Boots for some live lobsters; and within an hour had prepared the most miraculous lobster-salad ever eaten in the far west of England.

CHAPTER V.

WHICH IS THE BARONET?

“ *Si Fortuna volet, fies de rhetore consul.*”

MIRANDA lived on very pleasantly at Rothes-camp, gossiping with her grandfather, and helping her father in his generous enterprises. Autumn passed, and the Septembrian hours, beloved by Horace, were followed by a superb October, glorious in sunsets and foliage, and a November which, though a trifle iced, had its own special effects of cloud and mist and haze. November is a month too much maligned. It is melancholy to think of leafless trees ; but there is a great lesson to be learned from the fact that algates they renew their leaves.

The Troglodyte had made no sign ; he was prowling through Sark caverns, and sailing on Sark waters, not always unaccompanied by Margaret Delisle. His claim to the baronetcy was still in abeyance, for Sherwood's people were baffled by the determination of Mrs Tachbrook to swear to the claimant as her son.

Messrs Sherwood had written to old Doctor Tachbrook to ask if he had any information on the subject. The Doctor replied that he knew of the marriage of the late baronet, and also that he was present at the birth of his grandson, who, if he were now living, would be the baronet ; but that he understood he had disappeared from school when quite a boy, and nothing more had been heard of him. He had never seen him except at his birth, so he could not identify him ; but he was born with a certain mark upon him, which was sure to be permanent—also that it would be almost impossible to imitate this mark in any way.

Messrs Sherwood deemed it wise to keep secret the history of this birth mark, for the claimant to the baronetcy was so clever an impostor, that they believed he would manage

in some way to imitate the mark, if he heard that his identification depended on it. They thought it quite possible that Mrs Sherwood would forget it.

A lawsuit was threatened — “Tachbrook *versus* Tachbrook.” The Troglodyte was too lazy and careless to give his lawyers a fair chance; he liked lazing in Sark, and watching Adam and Eve swim, and talking to the schoolmistress. So there was talk in London clubs of a great *cause célèbre*, with all the force of the bar arrayed on one side; and the gentleman who styled himself Sir Harold Tachbrook got into capital society, and was tenderly, yet cautiously, tempted by manœuvring mammas. They were all a little dubious, these wise old ladies, as to giving him their daughters. Was he the baronet, or was he not? This was the great question in London, superseding all politics for the season. He had a great many faithful followers; and in process of time he got a wife.

Lady Flora Rantipole, daughter of that famous Irish peer, the Earl of Riffraffley, has gone through several escapades. There were wicked rumours that, although only

forty, and an unmarried lady, she was already a grandmother. Of course this was only one of those rascally libels which are perpetually promulgated against the aristocracy. Still it was noticed that Lady Flo was in a great hurry for a husband ; and when she made up her mind to have Sir Harold Tachbrook, Baronet, nobody was much surprised. Nor was surprise exhibited when the quasi-baronet was presented with a son and heir six months after his marriage. This, however, is anticipation.

Sir Harold determined to go to Rothescamp and survey the place which ought to be his, and be cheered by his future tenantry. With him went his mother and Lady Flo. They travelled in great state—four horses with outriders ; and come down by easy stages from London. Curiously enough, Rothescamp had some other unexpected visitors that day. On the morning of the day before, Miranda was walking down the street, and had just reached the “ Tachbrook Arms,” a hostelry which always attracted her, by reason of the fact that her unknown mother had dwelt there, when she was

accosted by a boy from the nearest railway station, who had a telegraph for Mr Tachbrook. She paid the money, and took the document back to her father, who was in the garden. He opened it and said—

“Good news for you and me, Miranda. Our old friend Tom Jones is all right, as I expected. He is at Falmouth, and will be here to-morrow.”

Miranda said no word. She had spirit enough to conceal her terrible delight, even from her father. Tears were in those brown eyes, but she crushed them under her eyelids. Harold Tachbrook knew his daughter, and saw her self-control.

“To-morrow!” continued her father; “well, I *am* glad. So are you, I ’ll swear, although you don’t say so. I wonder what train he can arrive by!”

It was an afternoon train, of course; and it brought somebody besides Tom. Tixover, you will guess: not him alone, but also the Troglodyte. Gilbert Tachbrook had been so sharply warned by his lawyers that if he did not look after matters his opponent would certainly beat him, that he felt obliged to

come over to England. By curious coincidence he took the same train with Tom Jones and his friend, and got into the same carriage. Recognition was immediate. Easy to imagine the "Hallo, old fellow!" where-with the two desert islanders met at Euston.

"We thought you were lost," quoth the Troglodyte.

"So I should have been," replied Tom, "but for my friend Lord Tixover, who picked me up in the very nick of time. It was a close thing, Tix."

"It was, old boy. However, you were worth saving."

"Thanks ! Have a cigar after that compliment."

"Where are you going now ?" asked Gilbert Tachbrook.

"Down to Rothescamp," said Tom, "to meet my old comrade. I telegraphed to him yesterday."

"Ah !" said the Troglodyte, "I suppose you expect to meet somebody else. Well, she is a charming girl, though she *is* a Tachbrook. I wish you joy."

They had picked up some evening papers

at Euston, and one contained a paragraph headed—

“The Tachbrook Claimant.”

What the self-styled Sir Harold had been doing is unimportant; but there he was, an unquestionable baronet. The Troglodyte laughed, and passed the paper to Tom Jones, who, for reasons of his own, was even more amused.

They were destined to greater amusement. At Rothescamp Road Station they had to take a fly: already the November afternoon grew dusky, but as they passed along the narrow road they could not help admiring the magnificence of a carriage-and-four with postilions and outriders that passed them.

“That looks like the lord of the manor,” said Tixover.

“Lord-Lieutenant of the county, I should think,” said the Troglodyte.

Now this was Sir Harold’s carriage; and we already know whom it contained. They pulled up at the “Tachbrook Arms,” in magnificent state. It was a chill night. Outside the inn many people were sitting in the

moonlight, drinking and singing songs. The majority of Rothescamp-in-the-Valley (not a vast village) swarmed around the "Tachbrook Arms." Our oleaginous aristocrat pulled up there, and asked if he could be accommodated. Sandy Mac said yes. So, just as the fly which carried visitors to Doctor Tachbrook's passed the "Tachbrook Arms," three visitors reached that comfortable inn. A troublesome trio they were: if Sandy Mac had not been a Caledonian, they would have driven him wild. The elder lady was cantankerous and crotchety; the younger was full of whims and caprices; the baronet was dignified and pompous, and drank much more than was good for him. It quite disgusted Lady Flo to find there was no fish for dinner; while her spouse was equally annoyed that the village inn contained no billiard-room. It was, however, noticeable that Lady Flora was decided mistress. Sir Harold, though he was insolent in his demeanour to other people, behaved to her in a very submissive way. She was evidently the leading spirit of the party, and held her position as might be expected from the daughter of an Irish earl.

Sandy Mac was of course made aware what illustrious personages were under his roof, and the news soon spread through the village. The villagers knew nothing at all about the deceased baronet, and had heard very little as to his possible successor; but when the landlord announced to his customers what he had heard, there was much shouting and hurrahing, and the bell-ringers at once proceeded to ring a peal of welcome.

Welcome of another sort had Tom Jones when he reached the Doctor's. Under the pollarded limes Miranda and her father awaited him; and as he took in his strong sunburnt hands her delicate white ones, both felt that their troubles were over at last. Tom had been round the world, but came home unchanged. Our old friend Tixover was quite delighted at having brought home to so lovely a girl her lost sweetheart. There was ample room both for him and the Trog- lodyte in the Doctor's hospitable mansion; and they had just settled down to an impromptu meal, when they heard a startling peal from the church bells, which all Rothes-

camp folk verily believed the most musical in England.

“ What is the meaning of that ? ” said the old Doctor to his butler, who had just entered the room with a decanter of Madeira that had voyaged as far as Tom Jones himself.

“ They say in the village that the baronet has come, sir.”

“ What baronet ? ” asked Harold.

“ Sir Harold, sir,” said the butler ; “ he’s at the ‘ Tachbrook Arms.’ ”

“ This is amusing,” said the Troglodyte. “ I never told you, Tom, that there is a claimant to the baronetcy, who says he is Sir Arthur’s grandson. The lawyers suspect him to be an impostor ; but Mrs Tachbrook declares he is her son. Is it likely, do you think ? ”

“ She had a son,” said Doctor Tachbrook, “ who ran away to sea in his boyhood—not long after you did, Harold. If this is the same, I should know him, for I had the honour of bringing him into the world, under curious circumstances, and he had an indelible mark upon him.”

Tom and Miranda exchanged glances full of meaning, but said nothing.

“ If he’s the man,” said the Troglodyte, “ I don’t want to give him any trouble, but he is certainly a scamp, and has borne several aliases, and does not look in the least like a Tachbrook.”

“ We shall have the pleasure of seeing him to-morrow,” quoth Harold Tachbrook.

“ And of exposing him,” said Tom Jones, hastily and with an excited manner. “ The truth is, that I am the youngster you brought into the world, Dr Tachbrook.”

“ You !” he exclaimed.

“ Yes. I ran away from that wretched school at Beckington—there was nothing to learn, and very little to eat—and got out to Australia, where I was lucky enough to find a Tachbrook.”

“ Why the deuce didn’t you tell me ? ” exclaimed Harold.

“ He told *me*, papa,” said Miranda.

“ Then why didn’t *you* tell me, you minx ? ”

“ To show a lady can keep a secret,” said the Troglodyte. “ But now, Mr Jones, otherwise Sir Harold, are you and I and the impostor to fight a triangular duel ? ”

“ Let me say a word about it,” said Doctor

Tachbrook. "Sir Arthur kept curious secrecy about his marriage, and I was the only person who knew it. The lady was a Miss Ella Geraldine, much too good for my hypochondriac cousin. I've a miniature of her on ivory somewhere; it is worth looking at, for all the ladies of the Geraldines are famous for the graceful curve of the shoulder. When Sir Arthur found that his son had married Miss Hartnoll, he was very angry, though it was of course his own fault for leaving him in such hands ; he wrote to me, telling me that he should send him the whole of his mother's private property on his coming of age ; and asked me, if I were in London, to call and tell the young couple what to expect. I happened to be ill at the time, and it was nearly a year before I went to London. Even then, I was so full of business, that I could only get down to Greenwich late in the evening. It was a queer establishment. Mrs Hartnoll, a weak-eyed lachrymose woman, who smelt of gin, kept what was half a school and half a boarding-house. Indeed, she would take in anybody, on any pretext, if money were obtainable. She had induced her daughter to marry

Harold, and now quarrelled with her perpetually because she had lost a hundred a year by the marriage. This I learnt afterwards, for at the time Priscilla was in bed expectant of maternity ; and, as the critical moment came while I was there, I officiated. Could I do less for the future head of my house ? ”

The Doctor refreshed himself with a leisurely pinch of snuff, and resumed.

“ The happy father was still a boy—an obstinate and morose one. He seemed to have been persistently kept down by his wife and mother-in-law. There was a mixture of depression and defiance in his character. He clearly cared very little whether his wife got through her difficulties ; and when I told him his father’s resolution, he muttered an oath. I believe he took full revenge when he came into his property.”

“ Indeed he did,” said Tom Jones. “ They were always quarrelling with each other, and ill-treating me ; so I was uncommonly glad to be at school, though it was a wretched place.”

“ Well,” continued the Doctor, “ if you are the head of the Tachbrooks, born that night, you have on your left arm, just above the

elbow, a star-shaped mulberry-coloured mole. I made a note of it at the time in my diary —indeed, of the whole transaction, for I have always kept a record of any remarkable circumstances.”

“ Faith, I’ve seen that queer-shaped mole on Tom’s arm hundreds of times when we have been hard at work on a hot day,” said Harold.

Tom was about to bare his arm, but the Doctor stopped him.

“ Wait a minute,” he said. “ My diary contains a rough sketch of its appearance.”

He went into his library, found the old book, and passed it round. Thereupon Tom exhibited his arm, and the identity was recognised.

“ I must give in, I see,” said the Troglydite. “ Allow me to drink your health, Sir Harold Tachbrook. This madeira is better than the wine I brewed for you in the Isle of Hawks.”

All this while the rare old Rothescamp bells were ringing merrily, and the air was filled with the pious old crusader’s golden melody.

"The other baronet seems to get most glory," said Tixover. "Suppose we stroll out in the moonlight and see what is going on. Of course he was the magnificent gentleman with four horses."

"No doubt," said Tom Jones, whom we may as well call by his old name so long as he is not actually acknowledged by the world. "The fellow has evidently lofty ideas, and deserves to be the real Simon Pure. What I can't understand is, how my mother can be deceived."

"She is not deceived," said the old Doctor. "I know her character pretty well. She believes you dead, and pretends to recognise this man in order to gratify her ambition."

"Ah, well I wonder what she'll say when she sees me."

"I don't know," said the Doctor. "Unless taken by surprise, it is quite likely she may refuse to recognise you."

CHAPTER VI.

A MOONLIGHT STROLL AND ITS RESULTS.

“The devil’s in the moon for mischief.”

VERONA by moonlight! Who knows it not, since Shakespeare’s royal hand painted the fair town, with its rare beauties and gay cavaliers, on his immortal canvas? Still even an English village by moonlight has a magical beauty, specially when, as at Rothescamp, there is a sparkling rivulet to catch the lunar rays, and a noble abbey church among giant elms and yews, making mysterious profundities of shadow to baffle the silvery sheen. This special evening the village was alive. The golden music of the bells testified that the ringers expected a

golden reward. They had made a bonfire on the village green, enacting over again the solemnities of the Fifth of November; and the youngsters were roasting potatoes in the ashes. They were also letting off squibs and crackers; for the village shopkeeper had not sold off all that she had ordered in honour of Guy Fawkes, and was glad of this opportunity to sell them at a reduced price, especially as they were growing damp. Perhaps a damp cracker is more efficient than a dry one, as an engine of annoyance, to be dropt quickly into somebody's pocket.

The "Tachbrook Arms" was the great centre of excitement. Its front windows were brilliantly alight, for the three illustrious travellers required all the best rooms of the house; and indeed it was hard to find space for their servants. Lady Flora had a lady's-maid far more difficult to please than even her mistress, since her own captious temper was naturally exaggerated by her mistress's captiousness. The bar and taproom of the inn were crowded with customers, all anxious to talk over the wonderful news, and, if possible, to catch a glimpse of some

member of the party. Sandy Mac never remembered Rothescamp so thirsty.

Harold Tachbrook, accompanied by his two kinsmen and the Viscount, walked into the inner parlour reserved for the village aristocracy, and found therein a few neighbouring farmers listening to Sandy Mac's story about his guests, told many times that night.

"Well," says Harold ; "so the baronet is here, Macliver. Is he as good-looking as the Tachbrooks generally ?"

The farmers grinned and guffawed.

"He's not much to look at," said the Scot ; "but his wife's a wonderful fine lady, and will have her way. She keeps Sir Harold in good order, I'll maintain."

"Well," said the Troglodyte, "bring something cool in honour of the auspicious occasion. If that's Sir Harold Tachbrook, I'm his cousin ; so I must rejoice at his return."

Thanks to Harold Tachbrook's having taken the inn under his management, it was possible to refresh one's self there without being poisoned. Our party of four listened to all the gossip of the evening, but said

little themselves. Presently there was considerable ringing of bells, and it was announced that Mrs Tachbrook and Lady Flora were going to bed. Not so Sir Harold ; he came heavily down-stairs, and exhibited himself at the front door in the moonlight, smoking the hugest Partagas ever seen. He looked the lord of the manor every inch—so far as swagger could do it. The two Harolds and Tixover examined him curiously. He strolled down the village street, and looked to right and left as if it all belonged to him. Now Tixover had a good memory ; flying round the world in the *Palinoura* had not washed away his reminiscent faculty ; quite certain did he feel that he had seen the ill-favoured quasi-baronet before. Soon his faint idea took form, and he remembered that, a year or two before, as John Jobson this person had been brought up at Bow Street for ill-treating a woman who lived with him. This he mentioned to his companions, suggesting at the same time that such a fellow, baroneted, slightly intoxicated, and in a country town, would be likely enough to do something of an objectionable

kind. He looked as if he were going out for a lark.

“A fellow who has been known as Moses Hyam and John Jobson is a nice young man to walk into the baronetage,” said the Trog-lodyte.

“Let us watch him, you and I,” said Tix to Tom. “Perhaps my instinct is prophetic. I often find it so.”

Harold and Gilbert strolled home quietly. The Viscount and Tom lounged and smoked on the unlighted side of the street. And the pre-imagined adventure arrived.

When the quasi-baronet had walked down the village street, and looked at the great tower of Rothescamp Church with a proprietary eye, and observed that everybody seemed gone to bed or going, he walked back again toward Doctor Tachbrook’s. There, late as it was growing for country habits, lights burnt in many windows. The Doctor had retired, but was studying in his own room: he knew from long experience that to exhaust the mind is the surest way to obtain sleep. Miranda had waited for her father (not to mention her lover), who was now

having a quiet confabulation with Gilbert Tachbrook over the events of the evening. Miranda's maid, a little person called Jessy Hatton, finding that her mistress was sitting up late, stealthily slipped out by the side gate, in hope of encountering one of the many young men she knew. This Jessy had no particular harm in her; but she was pretty in a rustic way, and had many followers and flatterers; and of moonlight nights she could not resist the temptation of waiting for an interview. A young person of this kind soon obtains clients. Jessy Hatton was popular among youthful louts, being wonderfully stylish in her dress, and coquettish in her ways.

Jessy had slipped out. She leaned over a wicket gate in the moonlight, waiting to see if any of her friends passed. She could hear therefrom the tinkle of her mistress's bell, and so felt safe. As she thus waited, the quasi-baronet came lazily up the street in search of adventure: when the full moon revealed to him a pretty little female figure in a charming attitude, he thought he had found what he wanted. The fluttering raiment

of the flighty girl charmed him beneath the autumnal moon. He went up, and commenced conversation.

Jessy, the veriest gossip in Rothescamp, knew on the instant who he was. She had listened slyly while he was described at her master's table. She was quite ready for a little fun, and probably thought she could trust a baronet.

All this while Tix and Tom had been on the trail. Jessy was induced to pass the gate, and there was a certain amount of kissing. Presently they observed that she was led into a dark corner of the lane, where moonlight penetrated not. They followed closely ; and suddenly there was a scream. Tix was ready : he sprang over a hedge upon the quasi-baronet, and grasped him too tightly to permit his escape ; while Tom Jones raised the young woman from the ground in a rumpled condition.

“ Where do you live ? ” said Tix to the girl, prompt in all his ways. “ Who are you ? ”

She told him, whimpering.

“ Go straight home. Don't go to bed, as I shall want to talk to you.”

She obeyed. The quasi-baronet, meanwhile, was struggling to escape; but Tix held him like a vice, and would have knocked him on the head with a life-preserved if he had been troublesome.

"Do you know who I am?" he exclaimed, fiercely.

"Yes," said the Viscount. "You are Moses Hyam, alias John Jobson. I know all about you."

The man turned visibly pale in the moonlight, but said defiantly—

"I am Sir Harold Tachbrook, Baronet, of Rothescamp."

"Are you? We shall find that out. Come with me quietly. Where's the police-station, I wonder?"

"Better inquire at the inn," said Tom. But just at that moment, as they were rounding the corner of the lane, a county policeman appeared, in the usual elegant attire. They took their prisoner and the policeman down to the front door of the Doctor's house, and Harold Tachbrook being summoned to their aid, made the constable take the baronet to the station. So that night Lady Flora slept alone.

When they had got this man quietly locked up, they returned to decide what should next be done. Miranda had already carpeted silly little Jessie, and found that this fellow had behaved in a rascally way to her. So they determined to treat him as he deserved, without any consideration of the position he daringly claimed. He was taken before the Elmwood bench of magistrates next morning —just when he expected to be amazing Rothescamp with his magnificence. The justices, in petty sessions assembled, would probably have been frightened if Doctor Tachbrook had not driven over; but he took the chair, and keenly lectured the culprit, and caused him to pay a fine of five pounds. The fun of it was, that, under Tixover's wise advice, he was described as Moses Hyam, alias John Jobson, alias Sir Harold Tachbrook, Baronet.

To return to the “Tachbrook Arms.” The ladies had gone quietly to bed, not altogether unused to the vagaries of Sir Harold. Lady Flora slept admirably, and, when breakfast was brought up, thought nothing at all about her lord and master. She expected him to

appear in the course of the morning ; and, after waiting a short while to see if he arrived, she ordered out the carriage, and went for a drive to Rothescamp-on-the-Hill. Four horses found it hard to tug the equipage up Long River.

The proceedings of the ladies were noted by Sandy Mac, under orders from Harold Tachbrook, and, as a result thereof, Tom Jones found access to his mother at the time when Lady Flora was amusing herself, and when the quasi-baronet was before the magistrates. The old lady, once Priscilla Hartnoll, was a curious and not attractive character. She had married a boy much younger than herself, simply for mercenary considerations, and decidedly against his will ; she had plagued and worried him, and when he came to manhood he revenged himself by using her cruelly. She hated him ; she cared little for her son, who was sent to a wretched school. When he ran away, disappearing for so many years, she quite believed him dead ; so, anxious to occupy a better position in the world, she found an unscrupulous associate, and taught him his lesson as well as she

could. It may seem surprising that such a woman could be the mother of an honourable straightforward fellow like Tom Jones ; but life is full of anomalies.

Sandy Mac showed him up-stairs, opened the door where the lady was sitting alone, and said—

“Sir Harold Tachbrook, ma’am.”

Then he closed the door behind him, and Tom Jones stood looking at his mother with a strong feeling of pity and sorrow. Her life had been a failure throughout, and now she ended it with a conspiracy.

As for her, she was completely startled. The strong and stalwart and sunburnt man before her was widely different from the fair-haired boy whom she had sent away to Beckington school, yet there was something in his countenance which she could not help recognising.

“*Harold?*” she said.

“Yes, mother,” said he. “I have come back to England at last. You know me, don’t you ? Look, here is the last thing you ever gave me.”

This was a curious little locket, with a fly

in amber, which, in some unusually amiable moment, she had given him, and which by strange chance he had kept all these years. She remembered it well, but there was no need of the token. She knew he was her son the moment he spoke to her. She knew his voice better even than himself. She burst into tears, exclaiming—

“ Yes, you *are* Harold. Oh! how wicked I have been ! ”

• • • • •
Mrs Tachbrook and her son had a long conversation, wherein she confessed everything. Harold Tachbrook the elder and the Trog- lodyte were waiting below all the time ; but Lord Tixover had gone to the magistrates' meeting to bear witness against the sham baronet. He was back at Rothescamp in good time, for Harold had lent him a horse ; hence it happened that he was one of the group at the inn door when the ramshackle fly hired by the quasi-baronet crept up, and that personage got out, looking rather less lofty than usual. Sandy Mac having been properly instructed, was on the watch, and intercepted him as he was about to enter the

room in which Mrs Tachbrook was sitting, with—

“ Beg pardon, Mr Jobson, but Sir Harold Tachbrook is with his mother at present.”

“ Jobson ! Scoundrel ! What do you mean ? ”

“ Well, Hyam perhaps. It does not much matter. Only, I wouldn’t interrupt Sir Harold if I was you, for he’s rather hasty, and I do think Lady Jobson’s coach has just driven up.”

This was so. Lady Flora came back in great disgust, for she could not obtain admission on any pretext to the house at Rothes-camp-on-the-Hill.

“ I ’ll discharge all those fusty old servants,” she said to herself, as she drove back to the “ Tachbrook Arms.”

She ran up-stairs in wrath, and was almost upset by her own husband, who was rushing down-stairs in abject fear. He was more afraid of his wife than of anybody. He would have rushed distractedly away, never to return, but Tixover stopped him—

“ Look here, Jobson, alias Hyam, alias Tachbrook, you are not going to run away.

Stay and see it out. Perhaps Sir Harold may think you worth horsewhipping or prosecuting. Stay here."

The poor devil stayed, in awful dread, and in a few minutes his worst fears were realised. Lady Flora had found Sir Harold with his mother, and had heard the truth. First she would not believe it ; then she heaped terrible reproaches on Mrs Tachbrook, who certainly deserved them ; then she rushed down to find her rascally husband, exclaiming—

"Where is the villain ? He shall be hanged."

"Leave her to me," said Tix. "I used to know her. Keep the fellow out of her sight."

As she came wildly into the inn passage, the Viscount met her.

"Lady Flora," he said, catching her hand before she could pass, "how are you ?"

"O let me go ! let me go !" she cried. "I must kill that man."

But Tixover managed to quiet her down, and she was induced to go to Doctor Tachbrook's house, and the old Doctor instantly took her in hand as a patient, seeing that her delicate condition and excitable character

rendered care necessary. Of a truth, she was severely punished for marrying, for mercenary reasons, a man whom she despised.

Jobson, alias Hyam, was permitted to depart, but a telegram was sent to Inspector Ubique to keep his eye on him. Mrs Tachbrook stayed a few days at the inn, and then went back to London. Sir Harold took care to make her comfortable, but his filial affection was not strong enough to induce him to offer her a home at Rothescamp-on-the-Hill.

CHAPTER VII.

ROTHESCAMP-ON-THE-HILL.

“. . . . hero gaudē.”

SIR HAROLD TACHEBROOK, otherwise Tom Jones, was soon placed in possession of his rights, now that the imposture had collapsed. Although a man of few ambitions, he felt some satisfaction in becoming the master of a great estate. The old place on the hill was worth holding and worth investigating ; for its libraries and picture-galleries and cabinets had been left untouched since Sir Arthur went away to live a strange life at Venice. Although so high up on the hill, and accessible only by the white chalk road known as Long River, Rothescamp House

was a moated residence ; for the perennial rivulet Rothe rose higher up in the hills from a spring known as Rothe Well, and filled the Rothescamp moat before it ran rushing down into the valley.

Old Doctor Tachbrook had not entered his grandfather's house for many a year ; it was with no slight pleasure that he gilded over it the rightful heir, renewing the recollections of his youth. A quaint old mansion, moated, clear water in the moat, no entrance save across drawbridge and under portcullis, garden in terrace above terrace, a noble view for miles across the level country below. Moreover, there were secret passages and chambers—for the old Tachbrooks had been Catholic Caroline cavaliers, risking their heads and estates from Henry VIII.'s to Cromwell's time. One lost his head, but somehow the estate was retained.

They were a joyous party, from the ancient physician to his youthful grand-daughter, when they reached the end of that tedious Long River, and entered the great hall of Rothescamp. This hall was the most remarkable feature of the house. It was, apparently, the

full height of the building, the roof being on old oak rafters, and the wall, from floor to roof, being about sixty feet in height. Round the hall ran tier above tier of gallery, all carved black oak. It was impossible to enter this noble room without admiration : and Miranda was in ecstasy.

“O grandpapa !” she ejaculated, “ what a lovely place ! Fancy its being yours, Tom !”

“Ours, you mean,” he said.

The old Doctor was peering curiously around, and trying to remember what he had heard and what he had known of the secrets of the house. At last he exclaimed—

“ Now, I recollect. We must get some candles. I want to show you a secret passage, Sir Harold.”

Candles obtained, the servants were dismissed, and the Doctor led the way. The passage from the hall to its galleries was wide and well-lighted, winding, however, rather curiously. On the first-landing hung a picture. Doctor Tackbrook touched a spring therein, and it swung on a central hinge. There was revealed a steep narrow stone staircase, which ran between the walls, and

here and there received dim light from carefully concealed arrowslits. After stiff climbing, they reached a kind of platform laid upon the rafters of the hall, from a hole in which it was easy to see all that was doing in the hall below.

“What do you think this means ?” said the Doctor, as soon as he had recovered breath.

“It looks like a cave,” said the Troglodyte.

Doctor Tachbrook, candle in hand, groped around the wall, and at last exclaimed, “Ah ! I have found what I wanted. You would hardly think I have never been here before.”

He touched a button ; a door opened, this time by sliding into the wall ; and they were in a large square chamber, with three windows in three sides of the room, all thoroughly covered with the cobwebs of years. On the fourth side was a superb bed, undisturbed, with tapestry hangings, embroidered coverlet, carved posts. On a dressing-table stood tall wax candles in silver stands ; every appointment of the chamber was magnificent.

“Well !” exclaimed Viscount Tixover, “this looks like romance.”

“It *is* romance,” said the Doctor. “I have never entered this room before ; but my father told me how to find the way. This room was a place of refuge for fugitives in troublous times —days when first the Rothescamps, and then the Tachbrooks, loved to fight on the weaker side. Somewhere or other in the library there is supposed to be a manuscript history of this room, and of all who inhabited it. If we could find it, the information it contains would be valuable.”

“How would it do for a bridal chamber ?” whispered Tom Jones to Miranda, whose reply was unheard.

Dr Tachbrook, at Sir Harold’s request, was induced to stay a while at Rothescamp. He had lived to old age within easy distance of the ancestral house, and had seen scarce anything of it since his early boyhood. Now he could enjoy it thoroughly, and he passed long days in looking through the old house, and investigating all its secrets. Of course Miranda, as a good grand-daughter, stayed with him — an arrangement whereto Sir Harold seemed not to object.

Love-making was the primary idea with

him and Miranda just then : they had a pleasant time of it, and made up their minds to be married on May Day, by which time the old house would be in good order, and all the new baronet's affairs pretty well settled. Diabolic dilatoriness is the master-genius of attorneys ; and although Sherwood, junior, was prompt for a legal man, he did not care to show unbusiness-like haste in terminating a profitable transaction. Now Tom (I must call him Tom sometimes, since Miranda almost always did) wanted everything thoroughly ship-shape before he married ; so the marriage was fixed for the first of May, and Sherwoods' firm were warned that they must by that time get their business completed.

“ They 'll have to do it,” said Sir Harold, fiercely, “ or I 'll get rid of them altogether.”

Miranda laughed at him.

“ Be patient, you absurd boy,” she said. “ We see each other all day long, don't we ? ”

“ You are a nice baby to call me a boy,” he said. “ Don't I remember you a plump little rascal in short frocks—very short, indeed ? ”

“ If I’m a baby, there’s all the more reason I should not be married just yet. Come, sir. Well, we shall see. I shall marry you just when I like. Don’t be disobedient.”

After all, Miranda was only just on the verge of nineteen, and Tom was in the prime of youth, and there really was no hurry.

Sir Harold, as Tom must be called on great occasions, though he will be Tom Jones always to Miranda and her father, insisted on everybody spending Christmas at Rothescamp. Tixover was willing enough, only he protested that his friend would get tired of him ; whereon Sir Harold strongly ejaculated—

“ You didn’t tire of *me*, Tix, aboard the *Palinoura*.”

“ Who said I did, old boy ? Well, I’ll stay with you on one condition.”

“ What’s that ? ”

“ Tell you presently. Try and persuade your other guests.”

The Doctor was willing enough, desiring to carry on his investigations in the amazing old house. So was Harold Tachbrook, who

indeed passed between his father's house and his cousin's many times a day, and was managing matters for his old comrade in a masterly manner — uniting frugality with generosity. Harold had a hundred plans for making the great Rothescamp estates perfect for landlord and tenants and labourers, which he was resolved to make Sir Harold accept and adopt so soon as things were in free working order.

The Troglodyte, however, wanted to get away ; but his friends would not let him. Too obvious was it there was some attraction in Sark beyond Adam and Eve ; but to allow Gilbert Tachbrook to slip away from these grand Christmas festivities was clearly out of the question. So he had to promise to remain ; and he did so the more willingly when he heard the Viscount's proposal.

“ I 'll spend Christmas with you, Tom, if you 'll let me take you to spend your honeymoon on board the *Palinoura*. She can steam ”——

“ She can,” said Sir Harold, enthusiastically.

“ There 's room for two or three honey-

moon couples in the cabins at the lobster's head," he went on. "Perhaps Mr Gilbert Tachbrook would come."

"Where do you think of going?" asked Miranda.

"To the Island of Hawks, if nobody objects. Wouldn't Adam and Eve like to go?"

So it was arranged that Sir Harold should give them a merry Christmas, and that Tix-over should be master of the honeymoon revels. Events occurred which rendered both festivities more amusing than was anticipated.

CHAPTER VIII.

ELLA.

“ The prettiest Irish lass that yet
Was photographed in chemisette,
Whence all might mark the shoulder fine
That notes the illustrious Geraldine.”

SIR ARTHUR TACHBROOK, grandfather of our friend Tom, married Ella Geraldine. When Tom came into his kingdom, he naturally received family information of various kinds ; and he and Miranda were much delighted by some pleasant letters that reached them from a second or third or something cousin, who bore the same name as Lady Tachbrook. They were full of a lively wit that sprang spontaneous, like the fresh flash of a mountain stream. This unknown cousin was staying at Beechampton Castle—seat of Lord

Beechampton, known heretofore as the Honourable Harold Hastings, but who had happily obtained his long-delayed succession. Sir Harold asked her to come to Rothescamp, and she accepted the invitation.

Having to describe loveliness in woman is always difficult in prose, though it may sometimes be managed in poetry. Ella was a complete contrast to Miranda, whose aureate hair and tarn-brown eyes had something unique about them. Perhaps the reader may be left to imagine Ella, premising that she had the loveliest and most musical Irish brogue, and that her white shoulders had that perfect curve which is an immemorial inheritance of the Geraldines.

When she came to Rothescamp, Miranda was there to receive her, and a very pretty picture they made together. She reached the house about half an hour before dinner—which is a very convenient time for arriving at a country-house. The party assembled were seven in number—the Doctor, the two Harolds, the Troglodyte, Tixover, Miranda, Ella. The old house had dining-rooms for several purposes; that in which our party met was

specially contrived for a small dinner in winter. A famous wood-fire burnt upon the dogs, but the vaulted roof prevented the room from being close. The dinner was that sort of dinner which consoles one for an English winter—oysters and game and wild fowl being obtainable, and mutton capable of being hung, and port-wine grateful to the palate. Miranda and Ella chatted merrily ; they found they suited each other.

“ I hope you’re a Jacobite, Miss Geraldine,” says Miranda. “ We have—there is, I mean—such a lovely mysterious chamber here.”

“ You may say *we have*, Miranda, if you like,” interposed Tom. “ It’s yours from this day.”

“ O, I’m a Jacobite,” quoth Ella. “ And I shall like to see your wonderful old chamber. It is underground, I suppose.”

“ No, in the roof,” said Miranda. “ You must climb up and see it to-morrow.”

“ Tix,” said Tom, “ give the ladies some champagne. I haven’t set up a butler yet.”

“ When you do, you ’ll be sorry for it,” said the Viscount. “ A butler is a nightmare in

a white choker. He conceives that he is engaged because he knows good wine from bad, and you don't; so in the distribution of wine he acts equitably. *He* likes good wine, and knows it when he tastes; any wine will do for *you*. You see the inference."

"There used to be good butlers, honourable and able men, years ago," said Dr Tachbrook. "There are few now, I fear. People are growing beyond service, and want to be thoroughly independent; they begin to think it a crime to serve God."

"The whirligig of time will bring in its revenges, father," said Harold. "We shall have to dispense with servants, and do our own work. I am willing. No man is his own master unless he can be his own servant."

"Faith," said Tix, "you learn to be your own servant at sea. I'm very much of opinion that if gentlemen were to strike, it would have a capital effect. Send away all your servants; shut your doors against all your tradesmen. If you've land, grow your own eatables. If not, go to the chief markets, and buy cheaply."

"You can't grow your own wine, Lord

Tixover," said the Doctor, "unless you annex France."

" Not such claret as this," said the Viscount, " certainly. And I am afraid that if we annexed France it would be more troublesome than Ireland."

" How you English *will* abuse Ireland!" exclaimed Ella. " Let us alone; give us our own parliament; we 'll soon prove we are wiser people than you."

" No politics," said Sir Harold. " They 're dangerous with an Irish lady present. Do you know, Miss Geraldine, your pretty name always makes me think of my grandmother?"

" It 's only the name, I should think," said Tixover. " Miss Ella looks a great deal more like your grand-daughter."

" I *must* look rather childish, if that 's true," said Ella.

" Is Beechampton as young as ever?" asked Doctor Tachbrook. " I used to know him at Fernley Chase years ago."

" He is in capital condition," replied Miss Geraldine. " Obtaining the earldom at last has made him young again. Beechampton Castle is full of brilliant society, and the

estates are rapidly getting into better order. You will see that everything will improve with his wonderful energy at work."

"I am glad he has come into the estates," said the Doctor. "He's the very man to do good in such a position, without doing harm. He might give you some useful hints, Sir Harold."

"I must try to make his acquaintance," replied Tom. "I like men of his stamp; they seem made of stronger stuff than is common now-a-days."

"Don't run down your own generation," said Tixover. "I won't acknowledge myself weaker than my ancestors. Probably Beechampton is quite as fine a fellow as that forefather of his who fought with the Black Prince at Poictiers, and built a castle out of the ransoms of his prisoners."

"Beechampton would take fighting just as coolly as he takes deer-stalking or buffalo-hunting," said the Doctor. "That I fancy is the temper of his race. They have the wild strong blood of the Vikings in their veins."

"He's a man worth knowing," remarked

the Troglodyte. "It is a fine thing to have a good ancestry, and a finer thing to exceed one's family average."

"I wonder who is the finest specimen of the Tachbrooks ?" said Harold.

"Your daughter," said the Viscount, whereat Miranda blushed.

Miranda and Ella took thoroughly to each other. Our nymph from the sea had scanty experience of English life, having remained at Rothescamp since her return to England. So she was glad to listen to the Geraldine's sprightly pictures of life in great houses, where each day had its new device, each night its fresh pageant. This she could repay by a narrative of her adventures, full of the keen breath of the sea. Of course the culminating adventure of the May marriage with Sir Harold was the most absorbing of all : Ella was delighted with so romantic a climax to a life-long romance.

"Tom," said Miranda, when he and the two young ladies were walking up and down the terrace one crisp November afternoon, "you must keep up some pleasant festivities all the year round when you are settled down."

Tom was smoking—too ancient a mariner not to love the enchanting weed. After a philosophic puff, he replied—

“ Yes ; anything you like. Christmas mummery and Midsummer madness. Ha ! here comes Tix : he shall advise us. By Jove ! what has he got ?”

For the Viscount was striding along at his usual swift pace when he had anything to do, carrying in one hand a pretty large hamper. When he reached the other three, he put the hamper on the walk, sat upon it, and wiped his brow.

“ Pooh ! I’m hot, though the weather’s cold, and growing colder. Tom, Long River’s a heavy pull with a hamper to carry.”

“ Why in the world did you do it, and what’s in the hamper ?”

“ I did it,” said Tix, “ because that ridiculous old Scotchman down at the Tachbrook Arms hadn’t sense enough to send it up here when it came in by the coach yesterday. So I gave him a grave lecture on the importance of punctuality, especially on the part of Caledonians. He wanted to send it up, but

I said no ; I'd take it myself. He looked quite appalled at the idea of a fellow with a handle to his name carrying a hamper up Long River."

"You don't tell us what it is," said Miranda ; "I hope it's worth the trouble."

"Give me a cigar to cool me, Tom, and tell me where to get some claret-cup."

"In November!"

"If a man is hot in November, why should he not try to cool himself? Come, let me have something icy, and I'll tell you the contents of the hamper."

Sir Harold rang a large handbell that lay on a garden seat, and quickly a servant appeared.

"Ask them to make some claret-cup as fast as possible, and not to forget the curaçoa."

Awaiting the arrival of this cooling beverage, Tixover walked up and down the terrace, smoking serenely.

"Well," said Miranda, "if we are not to be enlightened as to the mystery of the hamper, will you give us information as to what Tom and I were just now talking about? We want

by and by to enjoy life on a grand scale making our pleasures artistic and useful. Can it be done?"

" Done! Easily. Revert to old English modes of enjoyment. We have not half the poetic instinct our ancestors had. Spenser wrote marriage-rhymes; Jonson and Milton wrote masques. The high life of the present day is all ostentation and expense. The delicate and exquisite methods of enjoyment which were familiar to the Elizabethan period are lost in the Victorian. We have got duller during the last fifty years, as the Malmesbury correspondence proves. But London, under George IV., was infinitely duller than under Elizabeth. In everything, except fast travel, high prices, and expensive dinners, we have been rapidly going down-hill. That *facilis descensus Averno* is not likely to be reverted. Ha! here comes the cup."

It came, and was approved, though already the sharp November air was producing hoarfrost on the grass.

" Now," said Tom, " let's have your hamper opened, Tix. What's in it?"

" Skates!" he said emphatically.

“ Skates ? ” exclaimed everybody.

“ Yes ; I sent to London for an assortment, for a meteorologist I keep at Tixover Hall tells me every day what is likely to happen to-morrow. There’s a skin of ice on the moat already, and I believe to-morrow it will bear. I thought you would like to have some skating, so I sent for a lot that I expect will fit everybody.”

“ How delightful ! ” exclaimed Ella. “ I love skating ; it is such charming easy graceful exercise.”

“ I have never seen it even,” said Miranda.

“ I used to skate at school,” said Tom Jones. “ It’s a good many years back, but I think I could manage to balance myself, and even to teach you, Miranda.”

“ Not a bit of it,” rejoined the Viscount, “ I’ll teach Miss Tachbrook, for I’m the champion skater of England. Do you take lessons from Miss Geraldine. Shall we try the ice to-morrow morning ? ”

The ice was tried next day at an early hour by the servants, and was found to be thick enough. Tix, leader of the party, was in favour of testing it. Though it was

November, lovely sunshine made the day delightful ; but the thermometer was low, and the ice was firm ; and the moat was wide, and the scene was pretty when the ladies sat down to be fitted with skates. Fitting a lady with skates is just one of those things that an artist, with a love of ankles, can sketch excellently.

Tixover skated like an angel. Indeed, there were few things the Viscount could not do. He skated amazingly ; he taught Miranda to skate ; while Ella, who was a thorough flyer, soon brought Tom back to his ancient capacity. What a schoolboy learns he does not easily forget. As to the other members of the party, it is hardly necessary to say that they made several stars upon the ice, and were very glad to get home to dinner.

CHAPTER IX.

CHRISTMAS AT ROTHESCOMP.

“THE DUKE. . . . Let there be stately pageants,
And fair soft music wedded to sweet words,
And quaint old stories very soothly told,
At Christmas-time.

“THE TROUBADOUR. . . . My lord, it shall be so ;
Yet also there should be some gay caprices
Of frolic sort, to suit the youths and maidens,
And some grim ghastliness of spectral legend
To frighten them away to bed.

“THE DUCHESS. . . . Ay ! mingle
Poetic thought with thought of fright and frolic,
And you will suit us all.”

—*Old Play.*

CHRISTMAS at Rothescamp was a thoroughly pleasant time. Tixover took the affair in hand, and exhibited inexhaustible resources. He developed himself ; he developed everybody else. Nobody had the least idea before

that the Viscount could write verse; but he shut himself up one very drizzly day, and knocked off a masque in the style of Ben Jonson, and positively induced Doctor Septimus Tachbrook to take part in it. Then he worried Tom Jones into writing a farce in one act. Then he plagued the Troglodyte into producing a short but very ghostly melodrama. And he compelled everybody to join in the amusements, and he made Harold Tachbrook take the actual business in hand; and he altogether surprised everybody—himself included.

The three dramatic performances took place in the noble hall of Rothescamp, and were several times repeated to large audiences; for Sir Harold invited his tenants to pass Christmas with him, and bring their wives and children, whence it followed that there was a very full house night after night. There was ample room, without using that secret chamber in the roof.

As in duty bound, the audience cheered the lord of the manor's farce above everything. It really was not bad; for he took up and caricatured the proceedings of an

impostor who professed to be heir to an estate ; and he cleverly parodied the circumstances and characters known to his audience. In his farce the story was reversed, and the impostor got the best of it ; but he was then taken into the social arena, and made such a fool of himself among lords and ladies that his true position in life was revealed. It was great fun ; and, as it had been agreed that everybody should act a part in his own play, Tom Jones acted the sham baronet, and was amazingly successful.

The Troglodyte, under orders from the Viscount, got up a miraculous melodrama of the sea ; it was entitled, *The Haunted Island, or the Spectral Pirate*. This island was not altogether unlike the one on which he had spent so many years of his life ; and the central figure, played, of course, by himself, was the grim ghost of a giant buccaneer, who, in his lifetime, had buried an immense treasure there, and who now made midnight horrible by trying to find it there. Tix, who was a capital hand at scene-painting, splashed off two contrasts—first, the island in days of piracy, with caverns and other wild arrange-

ments, and the buccaneers smoking in their hammocks, with nude negresses to wait on them ; then the island built over with modern " villas " at forty pounds a year, with gas and water laid on, and the mighty ghost of the pirate chief, shovel on shoulder, knocking at midnight at the door of No. 7 to request permission to dig a hole in the cellar. A small policeman, in a large hat, retreating round the corner, rather heightened the effect. In the melodrama itself, the ghost managed to appear at midnights the most unseasonable. At No. 7, an elderly gentleman was dying, and disgusted his heir by recovering on the ghost's arrival. At No. 8, opposite the sea, Mr Romeo and Mrs Juliet Smith (*née* Jones) were spending the first night of their honeymoon, and exasperated Romeo threw some heavy piece of furniture out of window on the head of the unlucky ghost. At No. 9, there was a meeting of gentlemen and ladies for the purpose of spirit-rapping and table-turning—when a real ghost dropt in, they disappeared with alacrity. In this way did the Troglodyte perform his task, and there was general approval.

Tixover's masque was caviare to the

general. It was a new reading of *The Tempest*, with Doctor Tachbrook as Prospero, Miranda as Miranda, Ella as Ariel, himself as Ferdinand. Can it not be conceived how thoroughly like the ducal magician of the island Dr Septimus looked, with a long ivory wand, a costume of black velvet, lighted up only by his flame-coloured cap and his keen bright eyes. Miranda was all in Kendal green, with touches of white lace—appropriately reminding one of the sea's shallow emerald, flecked with snowy foam. Ella was a very dainty and delicate Ariel, whose songs were sweetened by the brogue. Of her dress there is not much to be said, for in sooth there was not much of it, and what there was appeared to be a cloud of silvery gauze. There could not be a finer chance of showing the Geraldine shoulder.

Tix's masque was all in blank verse that the audience thought wonderful ; but, as verse is not so popular as prose now-a-days, its publication may be deferred. Still, as the poetry of peers has, since Byron's time, been tolerated, it may be worth while to give one of Ariel's songs—

“ Oh ! why was I made a sprite, ohone !
In the air to take delight, alone ?
 To fly where swallow
 Dare never follow,
To dip where no petrel’s known.

“ Ah ! yes, ’tis pleasant to fly afar,
To lose one’s self between sky and star,
 To sleep, a vagrant,
 ’Mid roses fragrant,
When the winglets weary are.

“ Yet I ’d rather be a girl on land,
With warm white waist and a pearl-flushed hand,
 Like that Miranda
 ’Neath cool veranda,
Where she coos to Ferdinand.”

Let it not be thought that Tix irreverently burlesqued Shakespeare. Far too deep a reverence had he for the greatest of Englishmen. He merely put four of his characters into new positions ; and the only criticism of an adverse character passed upon them by the audience was, that Miranda might have preferred another Ferdinand, and that Ariel looked just a trifle too real for a sprite. As to the Doctor, he is irreverently nicknamed Prospero to this day.

It was two hours past midnight when these three entertainments were ended ; but nobody in the company seemed sleepy, and the great

logs sparkled and burnt blue with a brilliancy that told of frost outside and comfort within ; and everybody had suitable refreshment, for Tom Jones had fitted up a buffet in the great hall, and put some servitresses behind it, and supplied all imaginable comestibles. For the ladies there were lobster-salads, oyster-patties, cold chicken and game, ices, effervescent wines ; for stronger appetites, great rounds of beef, boars' heads, mighty pasties of Rothescamp venison, tankards of ale brewed in some long-forgotten October.

“ Let us try a charade ! ” suddenly exclaimed Sir Harold, when, after the Viscount’s masque was over, and everybody had taken refreshment, there seemed a lull in the evening’s stir.

“ Wouldn’t a proverb be better ? ” said the elder Harold. “ A contented mind is worth two in the bush, for instance.”

“ By Jove ! ” said Tom, “ you oughtn’t to have spoken that so loud. You and I were ‘ two in the bush ’ at one time ; and I think we had contented minds.”

Doctor Tachbrook was close to them at this moment, and said—

“Good-night, boys, I’m going to bed. Don’t burn the house down. And don’t try any charades or proverbs. *Dance.* It will digest your suppers and delight the girls.”

As there was a fine bevy of farmers’ wives and daughters, the proposal was received with acclamation. But how about music? Even Tix had not thought of that. There was a piano in the hall; but neither Miranda nor Ella cared to sit down and play dance music. As they were discussing this difficult question, Farmer Dering, an ox-like man, impelled by his pretty daughter Susan, came up and made a suggestion.

“Beg pardon, Sir Harold, but Jack Halkin’s the best fiddler in this shire.”

“Who’s Jack Halkin, Mr Dering?” asked Tom Jones.

“Why, he’s your honour’s footman,” said the farmer, with a grin. “I suppose you calls him John; but he’s been Jack ever since he and I were flogged at school together, which was pretty often.”

“Bring him here,” says Tom. “John, where are you?”

John, a tallish fellow, with a face of im-

mense gravity, under which lurked the merry devil of humour, was brought forward to his master.

“ John,” said Tom Jones, “ turn yourself into Jack at once. Fetch your best fiddle and play us your merriest tune; and if you use your elbow well, and make the girls dance, you shall see what I’ll give you.”

It was a merry scene in that great hall when Jack struck up and the dance began. Here and there the execution was not elegant, but this was compensated by energy and vigour. Susan Dering, for example, the pretty girl who had caused her father to bring the fiddling footman to the front, was about as light-footed as an elephant, and the strong oak floor seemed to tremble under her. Tix, a lover of heroic achievement, determined to tire her out; so he got her as partner for a polka, and told Jack Halkin to play the “ Firefly” at double quick, and whirled the farmer’s buxom daughter around at such a prodigious pace that she had no breath in her body when he took her to a seat, and an immediate restorative became necessary.

“ Heavenly!” she exclaimed, when the

restorative had been administered. She may have meant the milk-punch, or the polka, or her partner.

“ How shamefully you are flirting with that young woman ! ” said Miranda to the Viscount, presently ; “ you ’ll break her heart, and her rustic lover will break your head.”

“ Yes,” said Ella ; “ and then you can both be buried in one grave.”

“ Jack Halkin is a famous fiddler,” said Tix ; “ he ’s one of the few men who can make the strings talk, and whose tunes run so gaily that you couldn’t help dancing if you had two wooden legs. What a shame he should be a footman ! ”

“ Pooh ! ” says Tom, “ he ’s promoted from to-night. I ’ll take him out of livery and make him my musician. There is a lot of remarkable old fiddles in this curiosity shop, he shall have his pick of them.”

Tom kept his word ; and the fiddler, promoted from John to Jack, and from footman to musician, selected a Stradivarius.

CHAPTER X.

TIXOVER'S DILEMMA.

“ Some men change hourly, some men never change :
The best are changeful and unchangeable.”

CHRISTMAS festivities come to an end at last. The party dispersed. The farmers and their wives and daughters went home delighted with their entertainment ; they had enjoyed the fun and the fare, and came to the conclusion that the new Sir Harold was one of the right sort. Miranda was doubly popular, triply indeed—for herself, for her grandfather's sake, and for her wondrous adventures. All the tenantry on the estate were delighted with the prospect of a Tachbrook marrying a Tachbrook. Doctor Tachbrook

was a power in Rothescamp. During the long absence of the heads of the house from the vicinage, he had been their indirect representative, keeping alive in the neighbourhood the knowledge that the Tachbrooks were still in existence. He had been for more years than any inhabitant of the village could remember the connecting link between the gentry and commonalty; wherefore he had such influence as no lord of Rothescamp had possessed for many a year, and the people were all the better pleased with their young landlord when they knew he was to marry his cousin.

“They’ll just fit each other, and they’ll just fit us,” said stout farmer Dering (when he and his wife and daughter were talking over the festivities). “I never saw such jolly fun, or ate such good beef and ale. May Sir Harold live to be as old as the Doctor, I say.”

“The Doctor’s good for twenty years yet,” said Mrs Dering.

“I hope so,” replied the farmer. “And what a fine sort Mr Gilbert is!—and Mr Harold too.”

“ But what do you think of the young lord ? ” asked Susan, timidly.

“ I think he dances wonderful fast,” said the farmer. “ Don’t let him turn your silly little head, Susie, as he turned you about in that dance.”

The Troglodyte found it necessary to leave Rothescamp the moment the festival of Christmas was well over. His nominal attraction was Adam and Eve. The Viscount every morning said he *must* go away and look after the *Palinoura* ; but a strange fatality appeared to render it impossible. He stayed on, and talked to the Doctor and the ladies, while Tom and Harold (the two Harolds) were busy as bees in bringing the estate into order. The Doctor delighted in his tales of adventure, his gaiety of heart, his capacity to turn his hand to everything. Dryden, in lines far fuller of power than Pope’s character, has given us the famous Duke, who—

“ . . . In the course of one revolving moon,
Was chymist, statesman, fiddler, and buffoon.”

Our friend Tix, however, with no buffoonery in him, had a happy versatility.

“ He, in the course of one revolving day,
Could woo a lady and invent a play ;
And in the brief lapse of a moon would go
Through Quixote, Suckling, Rupert, Romeo—
Rescue a damsel, write a lyric, fight
Fierce as a lion, and make love at night.”

Everybody was glad to retain him at Rothes-camp : he was the life and soul of the small party left there. By Tom’s special request, and under the Doctor’s guidance, he explored the old house from cellar-floor to roof-summit: and many odd little discoveries were made which need not here be recorded. Miranda and Ella were his efficient assistants: now and then Miranda, with a pretty craftiness, would profess important affairs—something to do for herself or to say to her grandfather—and thus find pretext for leaving him and Ella alone.

One January day after breakfast they all went to skate on the moat. Everybody could skate by this time ; but no one could touch the matchless ease and swiftness and capricious motion of the Viscount, who seemed scarcely to touch the ice, so easily did he travel over it. When they had got themselves thoroughly hot—as pleasant a

sensation on a winter day as to be thoroughly cool on a summer day—they went into lunch. Thereafter the two Harolds had business ; and the Doctor asked Miranda to write a few letters for him, for she wrote a rarely clear and well-formed hand for a lady: and so Tix and Ella were left to their own devices. They went off together for further exploration of the odd nooks and corners in the famous old house.

At dinner neither the Viscount nor Miss Geraldine appeared. They had not been noticed since luncheon by any of the servants. Their rooms were unoccupied and undisturbed. There was a slight panic.

“ It’s all right,” said Tom Jones, helping the clear turtle. “ Tix invariably falls on his feet. If you dropt him into the crater of a volcano, it would erupt and throw him just into Tixover Hall. Perhaps he has been caught in the snow somewhere.”

“ But where is Ella ? ” asked Miranda.

“ *With* Tix, I should think,” said her cousin. “ She showed affectionate proclivity towards him. Perhaps they are just on the verge of a proposal.”

"Perhaps they have been skating on the moat, and got drowned," suggested Harold Tachbrook the elder.

"Perhaps they have gone away and got married," said Miranda.

"Perhaps they have lost their way in this old house," said the Doctor.

• • • • •
In "playing perhapses,"—a Devonshire game,—the Doctor was winner. Tixover and Ella, in the course of their investigations, had gone up to the secret chamber in the roof, where the Viscount thought he perceived traces of undiscovered mystery. He imagined that the history of the chamber itself, whereof Doctor Septimus had spoken, might be in some recondite depository.

The windows looking across the great irregular roof revealed different views of the beautiful country around. Southward lay the finest view, for there the rivulet Rothe danced merrily down over moorland and through woodland, till it was lost in a great river that passed in silent stately fashion to the sea. Here the Viscount and Ella stood for a while, looking out upon the bright

landscape, while a slight fall of snow began to drive across the valley.

“I wish it would snow fast,” said Ella. “I have always had an idea that I should like to be snowed in somewhere.”

“With a pleasant party and plenty to eat and drink,” said the Viscount.

“Exactly,” she replied. “Dear me, how much faster the snow is falling! It looks as if we might be snowed up, after all.”

“Well, we’d have some more fun, without the farmers.”

“And without the farmers’ daughters, my lord? I fear you could hardly amuse yourself in that case.”

“Ho, ho!” thinks the Viscount, “the child’s jealous. That’s a good sign.” For Tix was already beginning to think that the gay vivacious Irish girl would make him just the wife he wanted—if he wanted a wife.

Tix, however, was not at all certain he did want a wife. He was a professed knight-errant. He was pledged to rescue and protect all the distressed damsels he could find. How could he do this if he devoted himself to one especial damsels?

Moreover, there was the *Palinoura*. A yachtsman is wedded to his yacht, especially when it is something new in idea. It is his bride. He naturally thinks it the fastest and safest thing afloat, and if anybody ventures to contradict him, he resents the remark as a stain upon his honour. The Viscount was quite as much enamoured of his own yacht as anybody that loves salt water: and he wondered to himself that a fancy for a pretty Irish girl could keep him so long away from the inimitable *Palinoura*.

Thoughts like these flashed across his mind as, by Ella's side, he looked out from the highest window in Rothescamp on a snow-storm that rapidly whitened the moorland below. But the poor *Palinoura*, in his lordship's affection, had to give way to Ella; and he was on the very verge of throwing himself on his companion's mercy. That he did not do so was due to the fact that a vivid flash of lightning suddenly cut through the snow, and was followed at once by a hoarse and heavy roar of thunder. A winter thunder-storm, wherein snow falls instead of rain, is one of the most grand of meteoric phenomena:

the steel-blue lightning zigzagging across the heavy lines of falling snow had a strange and fascinating effect. The Viscount and Ella forgot the lapse of time in watching it--forgot also the object wherewith they had reached the mysterious room. They talked gaily as they looked at the driving storm : there is a curious pleasure in looking at anything of the kind from a position of comfort and safety. But Ella, though that warmest of all living creatures, an Irish girl, began presently to feel the material cold, and gave a little shiver, just perceptible to Tix.

“ You are getting tired of this,” he said. “ And the time has slipped on while we have been watching this wonderful storm. Shall we go down ? ”

“ I think so. I could look on at this for ever ; but I should like a fire in the room.”

“ This would be a very comfortable room, with a good fire, on a winter day,” said Tixover. “ But it would be a long way for servants to bring up provisions, and unluckily we must eat and drink.”

They left the window reluctantly, cold as it was ; for the snow fell faster, and the occa-

sional flashes of lightning lighted up the scene brilliantly; and from no point could it be seen so splendidly. Ella was chilly. Tix began to feel hungry. When they looked to that part of the room by which they had entered, to their amazement the door was invisible: the Viscount had closed it without thinking about it, and it was contrived so as to fall into the panel and be imperceptible.

"This is pleasant," said Tixover.

"Why, what can have become of the door?" said Ella.

"There is some secret spring: I must try and find it."

He tried: so did Ella, with fingers more delicate: but they did not succeed; and the evening grew darker, and the indomitable Ella grew tired and cold.

"What *shall* we do, Lord Tixover?" she said.

"Light a fire to begin with," quoth Tix, cheerily. He was rather puzzled, but would not show it. There were logs on the hearth that skeleton hands had placed there. Tix lighted a fusee, and soon got a blaze.

"Now, Miss Geraldine," he said, putting

an old-fashioned straight-backed chair by the fireside, "sit here and get warm, while I think what to do next. May I smoke a cigar?"

"O do, please," said Ella, warming her pretty pliant hands by a fire that was laid for some hapless fugitive many a long year ago. "It will be quite a treat to smell civilised tobacco in this chilly old room. How *are* we to get out? I want my dinner."

"I feel just like it," said Tix; "but I think we can manage some refreshment. Can you drink whisky without water?"

"If it's Irish," said Ella.

"Could you imagine me so base as to carry Scotch?" said Tix. "No," he went on, taking a gold flask from his pocket, "this is the real stuff, and has never paid duty. I wish we had some water to qualify it?"

"But what am I to eat?" asked Ella, ruefully.

"Do you think you could eat lozenges?"

"What! Keating's cough lozenges, I suppose. Now, Lord Tixover, don't be cruel."

"Cruel! Is it likely? No; mine are Fortnum & Mason's game lozenges. I always carry some in case of accidents. You may

not like their first flavour, but they soon grow palatable. Let them melt in your mouth."

It was a sight to see pretty Ella Geraldine sitting by a mighty wood-fire in this quaint old room, while the snow-storm raged more furiously every moment; and being fed by self-forgetful Tix with lozenge after lozenge, and little drops of true Irish whisky. All the while he cheered her with merry talk; and the whimsical situation made her laugh; and she chatted away, and warmed her pretty feet by the wood-fire, and looked a lovely picture of beauty in distress. By and by she said—

"I am growing sleepy, Lord Tixover."

"Then I must put you to bed," quoth Tix. He went to the old-fashioned bed and examined it carefully. It was dry enough, at any rate. "Miss Ella," he said, "I think you can sleep here. You need not undress very much you know. I won't look at your toilet. Come, I shall take your boots off. Now, try and make yourself comfortable on that old bed, that was probably waiting for an English prince, and only receives an Irish princess."

"But what will *you* do?" Ella asked.

“ Keep up the fire and smoke, as I ’ve done many a night in many a latitude. Sleep is not much in my line. Make yourself as comfortable as you can, my dear Miss Geraldine, and I ’ll try to take care of you.”

Ella divested herself of some of her garments, and loosened others, and was asleep in two minutes. Nothing like snow for sleep. Tix sat by the fire, and smoked resolutely, and pondered as to his course when daylight returned.

“ If I can’t find the dodge of that door,” he soliloquised, “ I must get out of window. “ This snow is rather a nuisance ; and when I ’m on the roof ’twill be difficult business. I ’ll do it though ; I hope that little girl will sleep well.”

He got up and went to the bed. She lay with rosy lips half-open, and one white arm stretched, as if seeking for something. She was dreaming that she was walking to meet Tix through fields of the bright immortal shamrock. Tix didn’t know that ; but he stooped and softly kissed the semipliant lips, and then went back to his fireside cigar.

CHAPTER XI.

MIRANDA'S BEDCHAMBER.

“Adventures are to the adventurous.”—DISRAELI.

DISMAY was felt at Rothescamp-on-the-Hill that night when Tix and Ella remained permanently absent. What had actually happened did not enter the mind of anybody; there was no fancy among them that the missing couple could have got into any difficulty within the walls of the house; so they organised a search all over the country, imagining that they might have been caught in the blinding snow, or struck by the keen lightning. The two Harolds headed separate parties; the Doctor and Miranda could only wait at home and hope for good news.

None came. They met at daybreak dis- appointed and weary. At daybreak, Tix, who had exhausted his cigars, prepared for action. First he went all along the portion of wall through which they must have passed, but neither eyesight nor pressure betrayed the presence of the door.

“The fellow who built this room knew what he was about,” thought Tix.

Then he went to the window and looked out. The storm was gone, leaving no cloud. The sky was the colour of borage-flowers. The whole wide landscape was white with snow. It massed upon the great square tower and the flying buttresses of Rothes- camp Church.

Tix looked carefully at the roof of the house through all three windows. It was not a tempting prospect. There was a chaos of gables and louvres and chimneys. As the daylight strengthened, it seemed to our friend that beneath the west window there was something which, so far as the snow allowed him to perceive, was a rude narrow steep stair. It at once flashed across his mind that, in the event of surprise, fugitives who

harboured in this chamber would have a way across the roof prepared for them. He resolved to try it.

Having thus resolved, he looked around the room for material assistance. What he wanted was a staff of some sort and a piece of cord; he found both readily, for the want had been foreseen. Four feet of young oak, with an iron hook at the end, occupied one corner of the room; while close by lay a coil of strong but slender rope. Armed herewith, he determined to attempt to descend, but first resolved he would awake Ella.

That young lady had no desire to be awoken, and resisted with the unconscious obstinacy of sleep. When she opened her eyes she felt very uncertain where she was and what had happened; but she blushed rosily when she collected her scattered senses, and remembered that she had passed the night with a gallant bachelor *sola cum solo*. *Non presumitur orare*, says the old adage; wherefore *non presumitur dormire*. Ella Geraldine had, however, slept excellent well.

“I am going to get out of window,” said Tixover, when his fair ward was awakened.

“ That will give you time to make yourself comfortable and presentable.”

“ O, but you are not going to run such a dreadful risk ! ” she exclaimed.

“ I have been running risks all my life,” he said. “ This is nothing, except that the snow will have made the steps slippery, and you see I have provided myself against accidents. Good-bye ! You will soon see me again.”

Whereupon he dauntlessly slung himself through the window, and fastened his rope to a hook in the wall clearly designed for such purpose, and with care, yet agility, made his way down the rough stair. Ella watched him with immense anxiety, till he passed beyond her sight around the base of a great chimney : then, with a laughing blush at the way in which her night had been passed, she commenced taking his advice so far as was possible. She managed to wash her fair young face with snow, taken in handfuls from the window-sill.

Tixover, when he passed beyond her ken in his dangerous descent, found himself suddenly stopped by a high wall. He was in a

corner where two portions of the roof met at right angles ; and the snow had drifted there to such an extent that he was almost up to his knees. Over the side he cautiously peered, and perceived that there was a sheer descent : whence it seemed unlikely that fugitives were intended to escape that way. So he looked elsewhere, and saw at once a square spot at his feet where the snow was melting. He kicked the snow away at that point, and found an iron trap-door.

This it took him a considerable time to lift, for it was massive, and rusty with long disuse. When he had succeeded, he was in no hurry to descend ; but, after waiting a few minutes, lighted a match and threw it down, and was pleased to find that it burnt freely. Then he searched his pockets for something that would burn, and found nothing but a letter or two to use as torches. Armed with this dim light he descended through the trap-door, and felt his way down a flight of very narrow steps which wound in a fashion not at all convenient. He burnt up a good deal of his correspondence before coming to the end of this stairway. It terminated in a

cupboard, with a door that was half ground-glass, and that for a long time resolutely refused to open. Tix had not travelled so far to be baffled by a cupboard door ; so he put his shoulder to it, and it gave way, and he found himself in a pretty bed-chamber, with a young lady sitting up in bed, half awake.

“ Hang it ! ” thought Tix, “ I ’m destined to be in difficulties with the ladies. Who is this, I wonder ? ”

It was, as he soon saw, Miranda. She had been sitting up all night in anxiety, and Doctor Septimus had insisted on her going to bed for a while. Not half-an-hour had she dozed before this invasion of her maiden retreat occurred. She was so scared in her drowsiness that Tix could hardly make her understand anything : when he succeeded, she exclaimed—

“ O dear ! how glad I am ! Can’t you bring Ella down the same way. Fancy that dreadful cupboard, that I could never open, being the door of a mysterious passage ! ”

“ Lucky for you that nobody found the way before I did,” said Tixover, laughing.

"I will go and see what Miss Geraldine thinks of a journey this way."

So he re-ascended by the same steps, and found himself, when he reached the window, face to face with Ella Geraldine, who was leaning over the sill, and whose pretty countenance was freshened with snow-water into a redder rose than usual. Tixover thought her "a vision of delight."

"What news?" she cried. "How soon you have returned!"

"I have seen another charming young lady in bed," says Tix, lightly leaping into the room. "These steps lead straight to Miss Tachbrook's bedroom."

"What an odd thing! Did they think we were lost?"

"Do you suppose I stopped to ask questions when I wanted to get back and tell you we could get out? Besides, she was half asleep, and I am not yet quite certain she does not think she dreamt I came to her. I wonder what Tom will say when he knows I have been in his sweetheart's bedroom?"

"Well, sir, you have been in my bedroom all night."

“ As much mine as yours,” says Tix, with a laugh. “ We have been partners for one night, if we are not to be partners for life. But come, do you think you can descend this way? It is quite easy with my help. Only, you may get your feet wet unless your boots are pretty thick.”

“ They’re thick enough,” said Ella. “ And did you ever know an Irish girl or an Irish horse that couldn’t climb? Why, our pigs are quicker than your greyhounds.”

She stood on the window ledge as she spoke, showing a pair of very neat ankles, and Tixover helped her down, and soon got her into Miranda’s chamber. Miranda by this time had dressed herself in a somewhat loose and lazy way, and had put a light to her fire, thinking Ella might be cold.

“ Darling Ella !” she exclaimed, “ what an adventure! We have all been so dreadfully frightened about you. Did you have any sleep ?”

“ Slept like a top, dear. Lord Tixover sent me to bed, and sat up and smoked.”

“ You *must* be tired,” said Miranda to Tixover.

“What!” said Tix, mischievously; “tired after a night with Miss Ella Geraldine! Faith, I think it was the pleasantest I ever spent, though she never opened her eyes or her lips. Never mind, Miss Miranda; shall we go and put our friends out of their despair? Of course they are all thinking that Miss Geraldine and I have run away together.”

“They must think me clever to circumvent *you*,” said Ella.

Miranda led the way to the bedroom door, and they found themselves on the first gallery running around the great hall. The hall fire, never let out in winter, was burning more brilliantly than usual at seven in the morning. Looking over the balustrade, Tix saw Doctor Tachbrook asleep in an easy-chair by the fire, and his son in the same state opposite him, and Tom Jones pacing up and down the hall with a cigar in his mouth.

“My old comrade doesn’t forget me,” whispered the Viscount; but the whisper reached Sir Harold’s ears, quickened by long watching on sea and land. He looked up, caught sight of the group, and could not

refrain from a “Hurrah” that awoke the sleepers by the fireside, and would probably have caused either Epimenides or Rip van Winkle to turn in his sleep.

The story of the night’s adventure took no long time in telling. Everybody was delighted at its fortunate end ; and Tom Jones, pitying Ella for having to sup on lozenges and whisky, was soon hard at work making coffee for her, and devilling turkeys’ legs upon the hall-fire. As to the old Doctor, he took a teaspoonful of brandy, and said—

“ I shall go to bed now. Nobody need wake me, for I mean to have a good long sleep. As to you, Miss Ella, you are the only one of us that has had a night’s rest. But what has become of your reputation, young lady?—sleeping all night with a gentleman in the room ! ”

“ Any lady may trust her reputation with Lord Tixover,” said Ella.

“ Yes, I think you are right, child,” said the old Doctor, stooping to kiss her on the brow. “ There are one or two gentlemen left, thank God.”

Tix as well as Ella was glad to enjoy

Tom's hasty cookery. Tom could cook: when he and Harold were roughing it in Australia, Harold acknowledged his superior genius in this direction. Tom devilled thigh of turkey angelically. Tom boiled coffee in an old-fashioned pot to a perfection that would have driven a Parisian wild with envy. Tom could broil a steak on a gridiron so that it should be tender as marrow, and full of juice as a ripe peach.

"It's a pity," quoth Harold Tachbrook, as he saw Tix enjoying his turkey, "that you weren't obliged to be a cook, Tom. You're a heaven-born genius in that way. Egad! what a lot of good dinners out of bad materials you have contrived when we were the other side of the world!"

"Shall I make you and Miranda an omelet now?" asked Tom. "I'm just in cooking humour. It's no use going to bed at this time in the day, so we may as well pull ourselves together by eating and drinking. This is supper."

"I have no moral objection to an omelet," said Harold. "Still, something heavier might precede it. You know how capitally you broil mutton-ham, Tom."

“Ah! that’s the way; you flatter my weakness. Never mind; the thing shall be done.”

And it was; and as they ate their supper-breakfast by the great fire in the stately old hall, Tix pronounced it the jolliest meal he had ever known, and Tom the destest of cooks.

“Well,” said Harold, “you ought to enjoy your meal after passing through such adventures. If the papers get hold of the story, you’ll lose your character as a knight-errant, Tix. There will be fine paragraphs about your nocturnal vagaries. Ella will have to send to Ireland for somebody to shoot you.”

“Ireland hasn’t a man that could do it,” said Tix.

CHAPTER XII.

SNOW.

“Arethusa arose
From her couch of snows
In the Acrocerauian mountains.”

THE Rothe well, whence rises the Rothe rivulet, is a cool dark deep head of water, far up in the hills above Rothescamp. In ordinary seasons it stands always at the same height, the outflow being usually of equal volume at all times of the year. The im-memorial well-head has a rude Gothic archway over it, and a perished inscription that looks runic, and a huge stunted yew that has taken centuries to grow into giant dwarfishness. Among Rothescamp sweet-hearts on long summer days it has always been as popular as “the Bush aboon Tra-

quair ;" its cool water has moistened many lips a trifle over-warm with wooing.

The famous old well has an eccentricity. Once in five years its waters rise beyond their ordinary level, and the tiny rivulet Rothe, a playmate brook, wherein young children can dip their feet and fish for silvery minnows, becomes a fierce fast river, madly seeking the sea, hoarse in its cry as Arethusa when Alpheus chased her. Many wise folk and F.F.R.S. attempted to fathom the reason hereof ; they might just as easily have fathomed the Rothe well itself, which became as wild and unmanageable as a woman, but with unwomanish punctuality. Trial had been made to fathom that strange spring, but with absolute absence of success. There was not line enough in the county to reach its bottom.

Now the quinquennial eruption of the Rothe well coincided with the great snow-storm, and the result was something tremendous. The spring rose to an immense height, and came madly down the hill by Long River, but was checked by the intense frost, which solidified its spray and turned it

at intervals into vast icicles. Fire and Frost were fighting their ancient fray. Fire threw from the earth's inner depth that imperishable stream; Frost from without fought against it, and strove to stagnate it.

Rothe rivulet beat its opponent, and took a most ungenerous advantage, getting aid from the forces of its foe, thawing the snow, and as it passed downwards, swelling its army with deserters from the enemy. Thence happened it that, on the day after the snow-storm, Rothescamp-in-the-Valley was flooded. Just as Tom's mutton-ham and omelet had vanished, and the partakers thereof began to think that a night of adventure followed by a supper-breakfast was not altogether unpleasant, there came a thunderous knocking at the hall-door.

“More adventures!” exclaimed Sir Harold. “What can be wanted at this early hour?”

A sleepy footman, whom the unwonted movement had actually brought down-stairs between seven and eight o'clock, unbarred the door, and there entered a fellow from the “Tachbrook Arms,” a gaunt lissom “boy”

of sixty that acted as ostler and occasional postboy.

“ What’s the matter, Tom ? ” cried Harold, when this fellow entered the hall at so early an hour.

“ There’s a regular flood down in the village,” he said, “ and we thought perhaps you might like to know it. The Doctor’s house is pretty well washed away, they say. The old inn’s a regular mash of water.”

This was the announcement which reached our friends as they were getting rid of mutton-ham at a great rate in the hall at Rothescamp. They at once decided to start and see what could be done. The Doctor had retired ; the two Harolds and Tix went off immediately, leaving Miranda and Ella to take care of the house. When the gentlemen were gone, the ladies naturally began to chatter.

“ This is a wonderful house, Miranda,” said the pretty Irish lass ; “ and yours is a wonderful family. In any other I should have lost my reputation for spending a night in a bedroom with a gentleman.”

“ Why, how were you to help it ? ” asked

Miranda. "That same impudent fellow walked into my bedroom before I was awake by a way that I never knew. Oughtn't I to be angry with him?"

"Of course you ought, dear. Why don't you?"

"Well, I'll tell you why I don't," she answered. "Tix is a man that differs very much from other men. He is not weaker; he is stronger than most of them. He is not cold or careless or dull. He has all the capacities of manhood about him: but he can resist temptation."

"A *man*! To resist temptation!" cried Ella. "Are you sure? Has he been tempted?"

"Didn't he pass the night in your bed-chamber, miss?" says Miranda.

While the girls were chattering a pleasant chatter which resulted in their deciding that Ella might be a viscountess if she liked, the three men had descended Long River through the snow, and reached Rothescamp-in-the-Valley. Their presence was welcome. The villagers were panic-stricken. Rothe rivulet, swollen by snow at the moment of

its quinquennial flush, had shown its noble independence, and become a perfect Simoës. The village was half washed away. The old Doctor's house had suffered : but chiefly in the garden. His books were safe. At the inn, which lay lower, there had been terrible work: Sandy Mac began to think the devil had something to do with it.

A whole heap of cottagers were flooded out, and it was to these that attention was first given. The difficulty was, what to do with them? Some of the cottages had been actually washed into shapelessness by the headlong Rothe, swollen by sudden snow.

“ Bring them up to my place,” said Tom Jones, abruptly. “ What’s the good of having a big house if one can’t help one’s neighbours. Harold, old fellow, make Sandy Mac charter some carts, and send these cottagers up at once. Then we’ll see what can be done for them.”

“ All right,” said Harold. “ It’s the best thing. We had better see how many are to go, because of provisions.”

“ Come,” said Tix, “ let us divide our functions. Either of you may be commander-

in-chief that likes ; I'll be commissary-general. How many people shall we have to feed ?”

“ Fifty, at a guess,” said Harold.

“ Well, you are fairly provisioned for the moment, but you will want more. I propose to ride over to the nearest town, which Mr Macliver says is Dereham, and to order in a further quantity. What say you ?”

“ I say you 're a trump, Tix, and always think of the right thing at the right minute. Sandy has got a cob that will go pretty fast, and Dereham's only four miles.”

“ Good !” said the Viscount. “ Bring out that cob. Before your waggons have got the unfortunate people up the hill, I shall be back again.”

Dereham, on the other side of the ridge of hill, is a little quiet town of about three thousand people. It was a parliamentary borough under Simon de Montfort. It has no political privileges now, and no trade worth naming, and nobody worth mention except old Sampson Rolfe, the landford of the “Red Lion.” Sampson is a character. He says and does what he likes, having money. To have money is to be popular with the

populace. Sampson abhors the populace. He is a Tory ; in fact he is a Jacobite ; but he has no reason to give for his political creed except his own *raison d'être*. A man of his size could not be a Radical.

Tix knew nothing of Dereham or of Sampson ; but the instant he rode under the "Red Lion" gateway he knew his man. The quaint old inn showed it him ; so did the burly landlord, with pretence of independent surliness, and a grin of pleasure beneath that outer crust, caused by the arrival of a pleasant guest.

"Landlord," said Tix, leaping from his cob, "give me a glass of ale."

His order executed, the Viscount went on—"We are in difficulties over at Rothescamp, The storm has washed away a part of the village. The cottagers are going up to Sir Harold's, but he is short of provisions. Can you get some for us ?"

Sampson Rolfe was a slow man ; slow, yet strong. He put his hand on Tix's shoulder heavily—

"Excuse me, sir ; but I like to see a gentleman take that trouble about poor people. There 's plenty of stuff to be had in Dereham,

and I'll have a waggon loaded for Sir Harold within half-an-hour."

"Thanks, my friend," said Tix. "I'll come over and see you again before I leave these parts."

The Dereham landlord kept his promise, and Rothescamp had ample provision sent up for its additional inhabitants, whom Sir Harold encamped in the great hall till he could find out-of-the-way corners for them. Meanwhile, Tix had an adventure: in fact, Tix found it almost impossible to go anywhere without an adventure. Tix, having settled affairs with the Dereham landlord, turned the cob home-wards; on his way, he fancied he saw a short cut. Tix was very proud of what phrenologists call the organ of locality. He had made many "short cuts" under the guidance of that organ, but they usually proved the longest way home. However, he still did it; and on this eventful day he put the cob at a gate, and rode, as he thought, straight toward Rothescamp-in-the-Valley. Presently, he found the Rothe had to be crossed; and the Rothe, with its floods, had become about as wide, though not so deep, as the Thames

at Henley. The cob was shy of water ; Tix made him go, having that strong hand upon the leather which a horse understands. When he got to the other side, he was pushing rapidly on, but the cob pulled up, and would not budge. Tix looked down. There was a child of ten or eleven thrown up by the stream, lying close to the horse's feet—dead or alive, who could say ?

“Good old boy !” says Tix to his horse, as he sprang back into the saddle with his moist burden across his knees. “Go a-head, old fellow !”

The cob seemed to know what he meant ; at any rate, he knew the way to the “Tach-brook Arms,” for he went there as straight as a line, and reached it in a very few minutes. Sandy Mac was equal to the occasion. The poor little waif was a girl—only half drowned, as it turned out. The women-folk of the hostelry took to it at once. Tixover waited only a few moments to see that all was right, and then rode the cob up Long River as fast as he could be induced to go.

When he entered the hall, he thought it picturesque. Tom Jones and Harold Tach-

brook were at the door to meet him : Miranda and Ella were making the cottagers comfortable. They had a general encampment on the floor, roughly and rapidly arranged. A curious mixture. Here an old crone was enjoying her refreshment in solitary dignity ; close by some young monkeys of ten or eleven were eating cold meat with a pleasant sense of being in much better quarters than they ever expected—and all thanks to the river. A village patriarch sagaciously smoked his pipe, and meditated wisdom. A village beauty tried to arrange her hair, and meditated conquest. The great hall of Rothes-camp had a very unusual appearance when Tix entered it.

Both Miranda and Ella were there to receive him.

CHAPTER XIII.

THAW.

“Diffugere nives.”

SUDDENLY veered the wind from north-east to south-west. *Suddenly!* Nature works fast. The heavy snows that had fallen on the moorlands above Rothescamp were turned into liquid in an hour. The Rothe rivulet became stronger than ever in its impulse to seek the sea. The weather grew mild. The savage storm had blown itself away, and there was nothing left but blue sky above and wet sludge below. And Lord Tixover could not enjoy it.

Why? Simply because when he went to Dereham, he caught a frightful attack

of rheumatism. All his joints ached, but especially his knees. He could scarcely walk across the room. Wise in his generation, Tix remained in bed, and lived on beef-tea and port-wine negus; and dear old Doctor Tachbrook attended him constantly. Notwithstanding all the Doctor's endeavours, Tix had to suffer much pain for a week.

Pain is power. Men are measurable by their capacity of suffering. Nothing more thoroughly proves the almighty-ness of God than His capacity for enduring the absurdities of His creatures. In the face of Tyndall or Voysey, Colenso or Garibaldi, any ordinary deity would commit suicide. How would you feel if you had created a planet with Louis Napoleon and Prince Bismarck upon it? Surely any divinity would shudder if he were held responsible for the existence of one-half the nonsense of life. However, it is possible that the deities are epicureans, and live joyously on Olympus, and look down upon the follies and frivolities of earth with a half-amused, half-pitying eye. Fancy what Apollon would think of the poet-laureate, and how Iris would laugh at the electric telegraph!

Pain is power. The best novelist of the day assures me that I should write a good novel if I broke both my legs, and were in bed for a year. I would rather not. Yet have I done some of my best work when smitten through from head to foot by pain indescribable, unutterable. I like pain. What is it? It is the final link of the chain which begins with pleasure ; and extremes meet, as I have remarked countless times. But I do not think I have heretofore laid down my new idea—*pain is power*.

Look at the martyr—a *vulgar*, yet efficient type—*Sanguis martyrum semen ecclesiae*. The man is burnt or flogged to death ; his opinions survive. They are worthless, probably ; but there are people who adhere to them, because he died for them.

That pain is power came strongly to Lord Tixover as he lay for hours with sharp keen darts passing through him. It is within the limits of possibility that children who have what is called “growing pains,” will in time be taught that they mean rheumatism, and that they had better not get their feet wet. They taught me nothing of the kind : they

taught me tare and tret instead ; and I need not say how useful I have found it. I rather think I also learnt alligation and double position. I have alligated muchly since. Having heretofore been accused of desulting and digressing, I, perhaps, had better return to my muttons—*videlicet*, Tix in bed. Is not pain power when it brings two pretty girls to look after a gentleman in rheumatic condition ? Tix thought so. When he became convalescent, he held a levee in his bedroom, and Miranda and Ella came to see him. He had thought much of Ella, even when he was in extreme pain ; for, was he not on the verge of proposing marriage to her ?

He knew that Ella quite understood him, and he thought it would now be hardly necessary to ask her the question. So when he was better, but still unable to leave his bed, he begged that he might see her. She came into his room with Miranda, and went up to the bedside and gave her hand to him. Tix drew her down to him and kissed her ; and then she knew that she was betrothed to him.

The old Doctor soon brought Tix into condition again, although it seems likely that

the chitchat of Miranda and Ella did him most good. They were always ready to amuse him either with reading or talk. "Tristram Shandy" was Tix's favourite book. He was never tired of Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim. He could always listen to the story of the King of Bohemia and his seven castles. The girls understood not a tithe of dear old Sterne's naughtinesses—naughtinesses which are never nastiness. Wordsworth once said that a man's capacity for understanding poetry might be tested by his opinion of Shakespeare's Sonnets. Similarly a girl's capacity for harmless fun might easily be gauged by her idea of Sterne. No good girl ever found harm in "Tristram Shandy." The Viscount and Miranda and Ella laughed over it immensely, and found no harm anywhere. Sterne is innocently pathetic; and Uncle Toby is the only character in our literature that will bear to meet those of Shakespeare.

Tix quite enjoyed his convalescence, and thought it worth while to be ill to have two such pretty maidens to look after him; but he began to be restless, and wished to be out again, for he had many schemes in his mind

which he wanted to carry out. He had arranged with Tom that he should be married on May Day, so that there would be a double wedding. And then preparations must be made for receiving Ella and Tom and Miranda on the *Palinoura*. So he begged Doctor Tachbrook to dismiss him. The Doctor tried to persuade him to remain another week in the house, as the weather was still damp. But Tix had such a firm belief in the goodness of his own constitution that he would not listen to the Doctor's entreaties.

CHAPTER XIV.

MAY.

“*Virgins, O virgins ! to sweet Hymen yield.*”—*BEN JONSON.*

O RARE Ben Jonson ! Odd that the unprecedented and unparalleled glory of Shakespeare should have almost effaced Ben Jonson for the common reader. Ben was a man who may roughly be described as Thackeray and Browning rolled into one. If he had lived in an ordinary age—Dryden’s, or Pope’s, or Wordsworth’s—he would have stood far taller above his fellows. He was, in fact, a giant ; but then he had the luck (ill, yet good) of being on the stage with a god. What is Achilles when you see Apollo ?

When Tixover got past his rheumatic attack, he went to see the small waif he had

picked out of the floods of Rothe. Sandy Mac had caused her to be well taken care of, and she was in better condition, perhaps, than her preserver. She turned out to be an orphan, daughter of some small farming folk. Tix, who was fortunate enough to have ample means of doing good, sent her to a school suitable for her condition in life. It was a lucky thing for her when his cob declined to tread on her. It is a lucky thing for a man when he can do good to others without harm to himself. This to do, a man must have brain as well as gold.

The next thing Tix had to do was to look after the *Palinoura*. She was to be ready by May for the great mellilunatic trip. So he ran off to Southampton to look after her, having previously arranged everything to his content with Ella Geraldine. The jolly little yacht was in capital condition, having been thoroughly put in order after her famous voyage round the world. Over one of the state cabins was inscribed—

Lady Tixover.

Who in the world could Tix have been

thinking about when he gave the order for that janual legend ?

While at Southampton Tix took a run across to the Channel Islands, and saw the Troglodyte. That eccentric scion of the Tachbrooks was enjoying the society of Margaret Delisle. Tix hadn't much time to spare ; when he reached the educational establishment above the Chapelle de Mauves, he found nobody at home except Susanna and Ellen. The Despot and the Boy had become very good friends, and were now staying at home to look after household matters, while the remainder of the family were away. Adam and Eve were teaching Dick to swim ; what the schoolmistress was teaching the Troglodyte it is hard to say. The only thing certain is that Tixover found them in the Boutiques caverns, looking out upon the sea, and apparently very happy in each other's company. They were slightly surprised to see the Viscount, who came quietly down the steep ascent into the nereid hall tapestried with sea-anemones, smoking a cigar, just as if he were entering the smoke-room of the " Travellers ." That

Tix belongs to the Travellers' *va sans dire*.

The Troglodyte and Miss Delisle were unfeignedly glad to see him. Even when people are spending a kind of introductory honeymoon, there are times when they would be thankful for an enemy, and therefore trebly thankful for a friend. It became clear enough to the Viscount that Gilbert Tachbrook meant marriage; but, when they had dined, and eventide came, they had a confidential conference.

"Tixover," said the Troglodyte, "you are a capital adviser. I want your advice."

"You'd like it to agree with your own opinion of course."

"Come, be serious. I want to marry Margaret Delisle."

"Why don't you? She is quite ready."

"She doesn't like giving up her school. It's a hobby of hers."

"People always have hobbies before they are married. She can make it over to her second in command. But what will you do with Adam and Eve?"

“Another point. They are never happy except when in the water together.”

“Put them in the water together,” quoth the Viscount, with a laugh. “Look here, an idea has occurred to me. I’m going to be married on May Day.”

“*You!*”

“Yes, I. Odd, isn’t it? So is Sir Harold Tachbrook. Couldn’t you join us? We’re off to your own island for a honeymoon picnic. The *Palinoura* will hold us all.”

The Troglodyte assented.

“I shan’t come over to England to be married in state,” he said. “Old Cache-maille shall marry us quietly, and you’ll have to come and pick us up. But you won’t have room for Adam and Eve.”

“Won’t I? If not, they can swim,” said the Viscount, laughing.

But as this was only January, and the triple event was to occur in May, Tixover resolved to hurry forward a second *Palinoura* which had been ordered from a Cowes yacht-builder a year before. She was to be of four times the tonnage, but quite as lobster-like, though with one or two alterations suggested

by experience. She was ready in good time for the 1st of May. She was the most wonderful of yachts, both for space and speed. It is generally expected that one of these days she will beat the famous yacht owned by the proprietor of that remarkable daily paper, the *New York Arcade*.

“Well,” said Lord Tixover, “you may depend on me on the 2d of May. By that time the new yacht will be in capital condition, and I’ll spread a sail abaft for Adam and Eve to bathe. We’ll all be mellilunatics together.”

The Troglodyte agreed.

From January to May is a long period when marriage is at the end of it. But it is very short when it occurs in a three-volume novel. Wherefore let us pass the chasm and reach the May-Day which was famous at Rothescamp. The double wedding, though not extremely brilliant, was extremely pleasant. There was rather a scarcity of bridesmaids. It would, however, have been found difficult to parallel the men who gave the brides away; for Doctor Septimus Tachbrook presented Miranda to Tom Jones,

alias Sir Harold Tachbrook, and the noble old Earl of Beechampton came from the Far West to do the same thing for Ella Geraldine.

The description of weddings must be left to lady-novelists. No one of the inferior sex dare meddle with such difficult questions. It is only possible here to chronicle the fact that Irish Ella became Lady Tixover, that sea-born Miranda became Lady Tachbrook, and that both couples were on board the *Palinoura* at Southampton before the evening.

Southampton docks were in a state of intense excitement this day. Many ships of an unusual kind had been seen on Southampton Water. Many a time have the *Simla* and the *Himalaya*, in old Crimean days, started from those docks; but never had the loungers who come down from above-bar to amuse themselves with the coming and going of multitudinous voyagers seen anything afloat so strange as the two *Palinouras*.

They started at midnight. Miranda was born at sea, and of course was delighted to pass her first nuptial night at sea. Ella

Geraldine, an Irish lass, who had had the advantage of Lord Beechampton's tuition, would have been plucky enough to pass her first nuptial night up in a balloon or down in a diving-bell. However, Tix's cabins were very comfortable; and the *Palinoura* went through the Race of Alderney with perfect ease and quietude; and when she crossed the bar of Sark harbour, the Troglodyte and his scholastic spouse—also one day married—were waiting to receive them. Both *Palinouras* were in Sark Bay. Margaret Delisle, now transformed into Margaret Tachbrook, had dismissed four of her pupils; the other two were put on board the lesser *Palinoura*, with strict orders to the steward to prevent their swimming too far out at sea.

It may be imagined that this was a merry mellilunatic trip. It would be hard to say who enjoyed it most. Tix enjoys everything. Tix lives every iota of his life. Tix knows not fear and cares not for pain. The Viscountess Tix, whom we have hitherto known as Ella, has the full pulse of the Kelt blood, and drinks in the fresh breath of

the glorious sea that surrounds her native island. Tom Jones is Tom Jones.

But Miranda ! she was again at sea. She had returned to her native element. The supreme sunrises and sunsets unknown to the lonely land, and only seen upon the immeasurable fields of sea, made Miranda feel herself at home. She was a descendant of Thetis with the silver feet ; she was cousin to that other Miranda who dwelt twelve years in the most wonderful of islands. She was returning to her birthplace.

Back to the Azores. Back to the Island of Hawks.

CHAPTER XV.

“ TIX.”

“ *Mutat quadrata rotundis.*”

THE quadrata of London are great facts, and would be still greater facts if only there were some one with rather more common sense than Ayrton to keep them in order. Russell Square, Brunswick Square, Tavistock Square, Eaton Square, Grosvenor Square, Lincoln's Inn Fields, are worthy of development: even Leicester Square is not devoid of capacity for being transformed into a pleasant garden. Why should not all these squares be so transformed? What in the

world have squares to do with the *Palinoura*? Ask Lord Tixover. Tix says—

“Here are three couples killing time on their way to the Azores. Ella is tired of me, Miranda of Tom Jones, Margaret of the Trog-lodyte. What shall we do? Amuse ourselves. Play whist, humbug, cribbage, back-gammon, quarterdeck-croquet, chess—lunatic chess.”

Full of ideas was the Viscount; and he had an efficient helper in his steward and boatswain, Jack Morris, who was ready to do anything under any circumstances.

‘Twixt South’ton and the Azores there were some days to be wasted: both Bo’sun Jack and Cap’en Tix showed their capacity of invention.

“Shall we have a game of chess, Tix?” says Tom Jones one day. “I used to play tremendously in the bush.”

They played. Tix won. Tix had a habit of winning. There wasn’t his equal at a Muzio or Allgaier.

When Tix had beaten all his opponents with an ease that seemed impertinent—for he might have given Tom Jones a rook—it

occurred to him that chess had not been exhausted. The inventor of the *Palinoura* had other inventions about him. One day he had smashed up the Troglodyte with a Cochrane gambit, and they were talking thereon.

“Why are we kept to a square of sixty-four?” suddenly exclaimed Tix. “Why not eighty-one, for a change? Where’s Jack Morris? Morris, paint me a chessboard with nine squares of a side. Look alive!”

“You’ll want a new piece,” said Miranda.

“And pray why not, Lady Tachbrook? Why not a new game of chess as different from all other games as you are different from all other women?”

“Have you really got a notion?” said Ella the Viscountess.

“Yes, you Irish lass, I have really got a notion. At present, in chess, we’ve king, queen, bishops, knights, rooks, pawns. All have their moves, and the results are excellent good. But we will have eighty-one squares; and between king and queen there shall be the poet, and his move shall be

the queen's and knight's move combined.
Look!"

Tix diagrammatised.

Black

White.

"What a lovely idea!" exclaimed Miranda.
"How it will upset all the Murphys and
Stauntons! What *will* they discover instead
of a Muzio gambit?"

"We must try," says Tix. "Where's the

Bo’sun? Now, Jack, is the chessboard ready? I must carve the new pieces.”

Therewith Tix took a bit of cork, and with his knife sculpt it into human forms, and dipt one into ink.

“There!” says the Viscount, “there are our minstrels. They’ll make a slight novelty in opening.”

“Won’t they?” says Tom Jones, who had longed for novelties when he played endless games in Australia with his cousin and namesake. “But why give your new piece so much power, Tix? And why put it between the king and queen?”

“‘J’ai fait, hélas! narguant le diadème,
Un gros péché—car j’ai fait un dauphin,’”

said the Viscount, quoting one of the few Frenchmen who could make that unsingative language sing.

“Well, I suppose the troubadour *is* king of men,” said the Troglodyte.

“And of women,” added Tom, “if Tix is to be believed. Certainly poet beats either soldier or politician in the end. You remember what Homer said to Agamemnon when they met in Hades?”

“No ; what ?”

“You conquered Troy : I conquered Time.”

“We shall find that game of yours rather hard to play,” said the Troglodyte. “The poet will be a difficult piece to manage. Fancy losing him !”

“What do you mean to call the game ?” asked Miranda.

“Tix, of course,” said Ella.

“A capital monosyllable,” said the Troglodyte. “Start it at once when we get back to London. Who ’ll make it ?”

“Jaques of Hatton Garden,” said the Viscount, who knew everything and everybody. “We ’ll advertise it as Tix, and place on the box a motto from Shakespeare—

“*Miranda.* Sweet lord, you play me false.

Ferdinand. No, my dearest love ;
I would not for the world.”

“Yes,” said Tom Jones ; “and there shall be likenesses of Miranda and me playing chess. Will that do ?”

“Capitally,” replied Ella. “Meanwhile are you going to teach us the game in its new form ?”

“Do you remember,” said Tix, “the reward

given by the Asiatic prince to the inventor of chess?”

“No—what was it?” asked Miranda.

“A grain of wheat for the first square of the chessboard; two for the second, four for the third, and so on. It exhausted his majesty’s granary.”

“Well, what are *you* going to ask?” inquired Lady Tixover, archly.

“What should you think, Ella mine? None of your corn and gold. Will you pay me in kisses? Three ladies—take it in turns. At a rough reckoning you would have to give me a quadrillion of kisses among you.”

“What in the world is a quadrillion?” asked Mrs Gilbert Tachbrook.

“A million-million-million-million,” said Tix. “If you three ladies gave me a million kisses a day between you, which would take up a good deal of your time, since I should want about a dozen a second—hard lines for all three of us—my reward would still not be exhausted for about a third of a trillion of years.”

“That’s extremely unintelligible,” says the Troglodyte. “Write it down.”

“ Thanks !” said the Viscount. “ I never rashly put my name to paper. Calculate anno domini for yourself, and I hope you ’ll live to reach it.”

“ How would it be,” said Miranda, “ to lessen the chessboard, instead of increasing it ? I think there is something absurd in two knights, two bishops, two rooks. Surely one of each would do.”

“ That ’s a better idea than yours, Tix,” said Tom Jones, “ Then you would have a square of twenty-five.”

Tom diagrammatised for his wife.

White.

Rook	Queen	King	Bishop	Knight
P.	P.	P.	P.	P.
P.	P.	P.	P.	P.
Rook	Queen	King	Bishop	Knight

Black.

“ The battlefield is a trifle narrow,” said Lord Tixover, “ and the first pawn that moved would infallibly be taken.”

“ Is not a hand-to-hand struggle,” said Ella, “far better than shooting at one another miles away? The Lion Heart, with his battleaxe, was a finer fellow than the modern general who wins battles by guns that kill half a dozen miles off.”

“ Well, one must have elbow-room,” said the Troglodyte. “ I am inclined to think that not chess only, but almost all our games, might be reconsidered. Tom, you’re a millionaire. Offer prizes at Oxford and Cambridge annually for essays on the improvement of cricket, football, chess, whist, croquet; offer prizes for the solution of the mysteries of the boomerang and mesmerism. It would be a grand extension of science.”

“ As to chess,” said Tix, “after Lady Tachbrook’s suggestion, I’m not prepared to say that one number of squares is better than another. I ask for eighty-one; she is content with twenty-five; the populace believe in sixty-four. Perhaps a mathematician might show that there is some square more convenient and efficient than all other squares. Just now we are all at sea, as much as the British Parliament itself when it is a question

whether grocers should sell what they call brandy."

It may be observed that a good deal of nonsense was talked on board the *Palinoura* by the three honeymoon couples. If sentimental or erotic, they kept such feelings for the privacy of their own cabins. Lounging on deck, or eating their dinners, they talked as if they had all been married half a century or so. The three bridegrooms had seen the world : of the brides, Miranda was sea-born, and Ella Irish, which meaneth much. Perhaps Margaret, the schoolmistress, was the most childish of them all.

When they fell into deck-debate, it was pretty to see how Ella fought for Ireland ; but Tixover conquered her by courtesy, being a greater believer in the Irish than are the Irish themselves.

" I 've married an Irish lass, and mean to quarter the shamrock," he said—

" ' Chosen leaf
Of bard and chief,
Green Erin's native shamrock.' "

" Tom Moore's shamrock was very sham," said Tom Jones.

“It was. And there’s a good deal of nonsense about harps in Tara’s halls, and Malachi wearing a collar of gold. But there is just as much nonsense on the other side. The last paper I picked up at Southampton contained a letter about Home Rule, as they call it, and suggested that Ireland might as well have its separate parliament as islets like Jersey, Guernsey, Man. With that I quite agree. A parliament in Dublin would be of immense social and political advantage to Ireland. But a leader in the same paper informs us that ‘Ireland is incapable of home rule, which is no great loss to her ; but she is also incapable of local administration and self-government, in the English sense of the term, which is a great loss to her.’ And the fellow goes on to say—look at it!” said Tix, throwing the unfortunate newspaper on the deck—“that the Irish poor ought to be educated.”

“They had better begin with the English poor,” said Tom Jones. “Accurate ideas of education have not yet reached the parochial brain. Irish folk are quite capable of self-government, but don’t want to do it in the

way preferred by English mayors and aldermen, who care for nothing except being knighted and getting testimonials."

" I prefer the Irish way," said Ella.

" Naturally," quoth Miranda ; " you like a good fight."

" Fighting nations are great nations," said the Troglodyte, oracularly.

" What I wonder at," says Tix the omniscient, " is whether this fellow, contemptuously disparaging the Irish in the year 1872, knows that in 891 three great scholars from Ireland visited the court of King Alfred, and that a greater than the three, ' Swifney, chief doctor in Ireland, the academy of Europe,' died about that time ? If people knew what was going on a thousand years ago, they would not write such nonsense. I believe in the Irish."

" Your wife has made you a Celt," said Tom.

" Explain the round towers," said Miranda.

" The subject is too difficult for a lady," said the Viscount.

It must not be supposed that all the converse between Southampton and the Island

of Hawks was either about chess or about Ireland. Miranda and Ella were both charming. You should have heard Ella sing “The Groves of Blarney,” and “Barney Brallaghan’s Courtship,” on a moonlight night. Then Miranda took to her guitar, feeling probably the mermaid impulse, and sang thereto verses whose authorship has not been discovered:—

“O happy life, whose love is found !
O happy love, whose life is free !
O happy strings whose soft notes sound
Athwart the sea !

“The sea has mistress in the moon,
The moon has lover in the sea ;
They meet too late, they part too soon—
And so do we.

“I am adored, yet must obey :
I am a queen and yet a slave.
It seems to me the self-same way
With moon and wave.

“O be it so ! O let it be !
O may I always rule and serve,
And live the life whose love is free,
And never swerve !”

Thus Miranda. Tix led a chorus of cheers. Then he exclaimed, improvisator—

“Look, we are coming fast
To where you were shipwrecked last.

Who knows on what shore, wind-vext,
You may be shipwrecked next ?
By the look of the blue coast I
Know the isle where falcons fly,
And can guess at the famous cavern
Where the Troglodyte kept a tavern."

At this point Gilbert Tachbrook threw a soda-water bottle at Tix, who caught it as if he had been point at cricket.

And the two *Palinouras* reached the Island of Hawks, and Margaret Delisle was beyond measure delighted.

CHAPTER XVI.

SEROZA.

“Intus aquae dulces vivoque sedilia saxo,
Nympharum domus.”

VISCOUNT TIXOVER brought his two *Palinouras* into the harbour of the Island of Hawks in serene May weather. It was a very different time from that in which Captain Grainger's unlucky wreck occurred. Perfect calm reigned ; there was nothing, indeed, to break it, except the salute which Tix fired from his brass cannon.

“This is my island,” said the Troglodyte, when the party set foot ashore. “I welcome you. Let us make our way to my ancient palace.”

“ Ah ! ” quoth Tixover, “ it will delight me. I like these out-of-the-way places, and could live in a cavern myself till my wife got tired.”

Here Ella pinched him as he deserved.

“ Let’s have some provender and bedding up from the yacht, Tix, and sleep in the dear old cavern,” said Tom Jones. “ You’ve no idea how lovely it is. I could pass my life there.”

“ So could I,” said Miranda.

“ I hope to pass a good deal of mine there,” said the Troglodyte, “ and my wife agrees with me.”

“ Yes,” said Mrs Tachbrook: “ I like lonely places and odd corners of the world. It will be such a lovely schoolroom for Adam and Eve. By the way, where are they ? ”

“ They ran on just now,” said Ella.

“ O they are in the lake by this time,” said Tom Jones ; “ and quite right too.”

“ Well,” said Tix to the Troglodyte, “ if you think of making this your residence at intervals, I’ll give you the old *Palinoura*, so that you may be able to come and see us in England now and then. Will you have her ? ”

“ I will, if he won’t,” said Mrs Tachbrook.

“ I don’t mean to be shut up in this island without power of elopement, and with nothing to do but tame my step-children.”

“ Perhaps your own children may want taming by and by,” said the Viscount.

Material for comfortable sojourn had been ordered up from the yacht, and our party made their way leisurely toward the famous cavern. Margaret Tachbrook was most delighted at the thought of seeing it. Always since her unhappy girlhood she had loved strange scenes, strange characters ; now she was wife of a man who lived in a cavern in a desert island, and whose children could swim like fish. It was delicious. She scarcely saw the beauty of the scenery through which they passed in her desire to reach the marvellous cavern.

The vines were grapeless, but the rivulet was cool. Adam and Eve, as Tom had guessed, were in the water by the time the others reached the lake.

“ Those young monkeys have not been taught much civilisation yet, Mrs Tachbrook,” said the Troglodyte.

“ What nonsense it is about civilisation !”

said Tix. “ Which is better—to vote by ballot and starve, or not to vote at all and live on the fruits of the earth and fish of the sea produced without toil ? Which is better—that your ladylove should ride in Rotten Row and read the *Saturday Review*, or that she should swim in a southern sea and read nothing ?”

“ It has often occurred to me,” said Miranda, “ that the world is rather neglected. I was born at sea, and always think that living on an island is the next best thing to living on board ship. And see what multitudinous islands there are where nobody lives.”

“ Here is one, at any rate,” said Ella. “ An island with Mr Tachbrook for its only inhabitant was dreadfully uninhabited.”

“ We ’ll inhabit it now,” quoth Tom Jones. “ Shall we hoist her Majesty’s flag ?”

“ There ’ll be war with Portugal if you do,” said Tix ; “ and they ’ll immediately send over a consul and a bishop. We should find those gentry a nuisance. The only consul I cared about I met in Barcelona, and the only bishop I cared about I met in New Zealand.”

They made their way to the cavern. It would be hard to say who was most delighted of the three new-comers. Margaret Tachbrook immediately began to think it would make a charming academy for cracked children. Ella wanted to be a mermaid at once. Tix exclaimed—

“This is glorious! Let us start a limited liability company, and turn it into the Grand Shipwreck Subterranean Hotel. Baths always ready.”

“I never passed happier days than I passed here,” said the Troglodyte, “with no companions but a couple of young children. Now, with another companion, I intend to surpass that happiness.”

“And so I am not to hear operas and see pictures?” said Margaret.

“O there will be the *Palinoura*,” said Tix. “Come to town in her for the season. My wife will always be glad to see you at Rutland House. There’s room in that queer old place for lots of ladies.”

While they were talking nonsense of this description, some sailors from the yachts were bringing things eatable, drinkable, and

sleepable. They meant to dine and sleep in the famous cavern for one night, that was certain. Tix always had a good cook on board his yacht, and the bill of fare was settled between him and the Troglodyte, who insisted on crater-fish. Tix, emulous of the knight in Boccaccios' charming story, killed a hawk with his revolver, and made the cook devil him to the uttermost; but the ladies all agreed he was *too* tough.

It is already known to the reader of this romance that three married couples could have convenient chambers in the Troglodyte's mansion; and in the great hall the attendant seamen found ample accommodation. Early next morning, Tix felt restless. He gave the somnolent Ella an unnoticed kiss, and passed through the next room, where Tom Jones was half awake. A whispered, "Come along and swim," brought the baronet out of dream-land. Down quietly they went to the margin of the crater-lake.

"Cold," says Tom, "for this latitude," as they denuded themselves.

"I like ice," says the Viscount, "just as I like heat. It's your medium I hate; ex-

tremes are my delight. Geniuses I like, and fools I like; commonplace people I detest."

"How you must detest me!" said Tom Jones.

"O very," says the Viscount. "But, Tom, look! What's that on the other shore? It can't be a gorilla."

"It certainly can't," said Tom. "Let's rush round and see. It's uncommonly like a female of the human race."

"Right," says the Viscount; "we'll rush," suiting action to word. They postponed their bath, and skirted the lake at double quick. When they arrived at the point where they had seen this apparition, they found themselves in presence of a rather pretty girl, who seemed about nineteen or twenty, a mere child in fact. When they addressed her, she merely made signs, pointing to her ears and lips; and Tix instantly divined she was deaf, and therefore dumb.

"Where in the world can she have come from?" said Tom Jones. "Hadn't we better see if there's anybody else about? It's uncommonly queer."

“ You investigate,” said Tix, “ while I try to console her.”

So Tom rambled about the place, finding nothing; while Tix, the kindest and most ingenious of men, did his best to find out something about this fair maiden. He was obliged to talk by touch. He discovered that she knew nothing of any ordinary finger-alphabet. She only shook her head when he used those mysterious dactylics which are the approved language of persons without hearing.

The girl appeared to be of some other race than English. Her dress was picturesque, and without soil of shipwreck. She was evidently glad to see human faces, and showed no touch of savage shyness. When Tom Jones returned from his useless search for any clue to her being there, he and Tix exchanged opinions, but could only arrive at the conclusion that the child was a deaf mute and might be a good pupil for Mrs Gilbert Tachbrook.

At breakfast in the cavern the arrival of this stranger caused immense excitement. Margaret Tachbrook at once marked her

down for a pupil. Miranda, sea-born, fancied she might be like herself therein. Nobody could guess any solution of her solitary appearance on the island; but it was agreed with unanimity that she must be taken care of, and that she looked quite worth the trouble. She evidently was delighted to be among friends, and enjoyed the breakfast brought together by joint work of Tix and the Troglodyte—one from the yacht, the other from the island. The Viscount's London stores mixed pleasantly with the insular delicacies. It was new to sit in a cavern looking out upon a lake, and drink caravan-tea from Fortnum's, with goat's-milk to cool it, and eat crater-fish with soy and anchovy.

"I wish the Irish would colonise this lovely island," said Ella.

"If they wouldn't fight," said Miranda.
"Dear me, why *will* they fight?"

"Born in them," said Tix. "They like fighting. They ought to be let fight. If I had a hundred thousand Irishmen, I'd conquer half the world."

"You ought to be Lord-Lieutenant," said the Troglodyte.

“ I would not hold the position to be controlled by your English Ministries. If I were at Dublin Castle, with power to do what I liked for a year, they might hang me at the end of it if I did not pacify and satisfy Ireland.”

“ I ’d help,” said Ella.

“ What ! to hang your husband, my dear ? ” said Mrs Tachbrook.

“ If he failed. I am not afraid of that. He never fails in anything.”

“ Lucky man ! ” said the Troglodyte. “ But I think you are right about Ireland, Tixover. One man who understood the people would set them right. They have produced, from time immemorial, the greatest soldiers and scholars ; they could do the same again if they were not governed by dolts.”

“ Yes, that ’s the true point,” quoth Tom Jones. “ English people, as I soon saw when I came back, manage themselves so well that it does not much matter whether the monarch or the premier is a fool. Self-controlled and individual, we are mechanically loyal, and habitually obedient to even bad laws. The Irishman is otherwise. He wants a king

whom he can worship ; a prime minister who is a great orator and wielder of influence ; a parliament full of fire and life ; laws that have some equity in them. It is not surprising that the English cannot manage Ireland when they cannot manage Kew Gardens."

"I sometimes fear," said Tix, "that we grow weaker in our governing faculty, which has made us the first nation in the world. I can quite clearly see the English deficiency. We have pluck and strength, but not enough insight and sympathy. We can crush a mutiny in India, but we ought to have been able to prevent it—and might have done so if we could only understand the people to be governed. But fancy an English officer being expected to know or care anything about Vishnu ! The people look upon us as a plague, like a rainy season or cholera, and pray for deliverance. It is nearly the same with the Irish, near neighbours as they are. They are a feminine nation, that has contracted a marriage of aversion with a masculine nation. The masculine nation is a fool, and won't let its wife have her way, not

knowing how soon she would be tired of it and long to be obedient."

"I shall box your ears, Tix," said Ella.

"Do, child. I like the cooling touch of your fairy hands."

Mrs Gilbert Tachbrook, an expert in unusual developments of humanity, had been, during this conversation, trying to get the new-comer into some sort of intelligent communication. Although it proved impossible, she remarked that her face had not the vacant look which belongs to most deaf mutes when people converse around them, and she whispered this to her husband, who passed on the observation to Tixover. Tix formed a theory at once, for he was always forming theories, just as a tree forms leaves. It was that the girl might possibly be dumb by malformation, and not have lost the sense of hearing. He led the conversation to a topic which he thought might arouse her, if she really had any comprehension of language, and that language chanced to be English.

"I am not sure, Mrs Tachbrook," he said, "that it might not be an advantage to lose a

sense or two. What a keen eye for the profound beauty of nature had Wordsworth, who possessed no sense of smell. When Milton grew corporeally blind, his intellectual vision swept Paradise and Heaven and Hell. What a luxury to be deaf in a country infested by organ-grinders, or dumb in a parliament of interminable orators!"

"Did you ever speak in the House of Lords?" said Sir Harold.

"Me! No; but I mean to, now that I have an Irish grievance in the shape of an Irish wife."

"What an incorrigible boy you are, Tix!" said Miranda.

"I think," said the Troglodyte, who had been meditative, "that your notion of the deprivation of a sense has ontologic basis. It is just like Miranda's idea of playing chess with fewer pieces on fewer squares. To lose sight must be terrible, but I can well imagine its increasing the mental power of a great man like Milton."

"Ay; and even his happiness," said Tom Jones.

"Again," quoth the Troglodyte, "loss of

power is gain of power, and loss of pleasure is gain of pleasure. There comes a time in life, earlier much in some men than in others, but latest in the greatest, when what people call pleasure is a nuisance. The words pleasure and pain become reversed. There is no pleasure in eating sweatmeats or drinking champagne. There is pleasure indescribable and unimaginable in the keen battle-wound, in suffering trouble for a friend, in anything which makes you feel higher than the mere common circumstance of life. A man, conscious of his manhood, ought never to think what will happen to him."

" I am quite with you," said the Viscount ; " existence is enough for me. Give me life ; I 'll live it. We are too much the slaves of circumstance. ' We look before and after,' as Shelley puts it, instead of just taking the day as it comes. What can happen to any man that he need fear ? I like life, especially now that I am married, Lady Tixover ; but I think I should like to solve the problem of death."

" I 'll marry again if you do," said Ella.

While this irregular conversation had rambled on, the new-comer had not been unnoticed. She seemed in some degree to follow it, and the three ladies agreed that they had noticed once or twice a pretty moisture in her eyes.

“How could she understand anything?” said Tom Jones; “she does not look English. Besides, how is a dumb person to catch the meanings of language?”

“O we’ll discuss that by and by,” said Tix. “I’ve a theory about her, and a scheme for her; meanwhile, as she had better have a name, I propose to be her godfather, and christen her SEROZA.”

“Pretty name! where did you find it?”

“In the Azores.”

CHAPTER XVII.

AGAIN AT SEA.

“Cras ingens iterabimus aequor.”

PLEASANT weeks they passed in the Island of Hawks, exploring its marvellous caverns and enjoying its lovely climate. Tix and Tom Jones, however, began to grow restless, and wanted to travel farther. So one day, when the sky was blue and the crater-lake calm, they held council of war.

“I vote for a move,” said Tix, just like a school-boy. “All in favour of it, hold up their hands.”

Here is the division-list—*place aux dames*:-

Ayes.

Ella Lady Tixover.
Dame Miranda Tachbrook.
The Viscount Tixover.
Sir Harold Tachbrook.

Noes.

Mrs Gilbert Tachbrook.
The Lord of the Isle.

“No,” said the Troglodyte, “I can’t leave my island yet, and my wife agrees with me. How long we shall stay I don’t know; but by your magnificent present, Tix, I shall be free to move at any moment. Will the men like staying? Mayn’t they find it slow?”

“You ’ll only want six, or perhaps seven, and there are forty on the two yachts, for I had more than necessary. We can try which will volunteer. If you keep them employed on shore, and occasionally take a cruise among the other islands, they ’ll be contented enough. Seamen, as you know, can put their hands to anything, and like nothing so well as being occupied.”

“I will find them employment,” said Margaret Tachbrook. “And I shall civilise Adam and Eve, and cultivate Seroza.”

“Ah! wait,” said Ella, impetuously. “You must not have that child. Tix has a theory about her.” (Ella always called the Viscount Tix, like everybody else, though his Christian name, hereditary in the family, was Edward.) “He thinks that dear Doctor Tachbrook might cure her.”

“Why might not I ?” asked the inveterate schoolmistress.

“I would rather trust the Doctor, Maggie,” said the Troglodyte. “Those keen old eyes of his seem to see through everything.”

“Perhaps you are right,” she answered ; “and I shall have quite trouble enough with you and your young barbarians.”

“I believe the Doctor might do good,” said Sir Harold. “I never knew a man who gave me so much the idea of one of the famous old alchemists. If anybody could discover the philosopher’s stone or the elixir of life, it is Septimus Tachbrook.”

“The philosopher’s stone will be found one day,” said Tix. “All the best modern chemists hold that the multitudinous metals which resist analysis are capable of being transmuted. I think they will be found to be all different forms of hydrogen.”

“But hydrogen is the lightest of gases, Tix,” said Tom Jones, “and metals are so jolly heavy.”

“Some of them. Potassium and sodium are lighter than water. We have not arrived at the ultimate elements in chemistry yet.

I believe they are a trinity, like everything else in nature—that they are oxygen, hydrogen, and nitrogen."

"How about carbon?" asked the Trogolodyte.

"Allotropic hydrogen. What can be more like a diamond than a dew-drop or a tear in a pretty eye?"

"Ella," said Miranda, "why *do* you let your husband talk nonsense and pretend it is science? Keep him in order, as I do mine."

Several trusty seamen were ready volunteers for service in the lesser *Palinoura*, Captain Trogolodyte in command: they liked the pleasant island's lazy life. Mr and Mrs Tachbrook found themselves provided with a following of fellows ready to do anything, from cooking a potato to killing a pirate.

Tix steamed over to Saint Michael for provisions and coals, and took the opportunity of inquiring as to whether any wreck or accident had occurred which might account for Seroza's appearance, but could hear of nothing. The loveliness of the country and the laziness of the people astonished our voyagers, who had

never before seen such fertility of soil or such an unwashed aristocracy.

“ What are we to do next, Tom ? ” asked the Viscount. “ I should like a long cruise, but I suppose both of us ought to attend to certain plaguey home-duties. What say you ? And what say the ladies ? Shall we go right down the Atlantic and run up the Amazon to the Andes ? ”

“ What’s your fancy for that ? ” asked his lady-love. “ It’s a barbarous place, isn’t it ? They never taught me any geography, I am glad to say.”

“ Barbarous ! ” cried Tix ; “ the loveliest river in the world ! Fifty thousand miles of navigable water ! Its mouth is about as wide as the Thames is long.”

“ Is a wide mouth esteemed a beauty in a river ? ” asked Miranda.

“ Come, Tix,” said Tom, “ these girls are chaffing you. What is it all about—your Amazon ? What’s the attraction ? ”

“ Well,” said the Viscount, “ Orellana, who first investigated it, said he came among Amazons high up the stream—a nation of them. Taller than men, he reported them,

and very beautiful, and keeping men in complete subjection as hewers of wood and drawers of water."

"How charming!" exclaimed Miranda. "Let us go and find them. I should like to see how they manage their husbands, and take a lesson home for the ladies of England."

"I don't believe in your Amazons," said Tom Jones, "but I should like to go up the river for all that. They won't expect us back yet: Harold will look after Rothescamp. I think we might try the experiment if you really fancy it."

"I fancy it much," said Ella. "I should like to bring home a few Amazons and turn them loose in Ireland. They might keep some sort of order."

"Faith! let's try it," cried the Viscount. "If there's any bother, we need not go on. I love a cruise with an object at the end."

"I like quietude at sea for its own sake," said Miranda, "and could stand it for ever. Still, if you catch your Amazons, I shall not object. One might be useful as a lady's-maid."

“ Ah, you should see them as Orellana describes ; then I think you ’d rather not.”

As this conversation occurred, the *Palinoura* lay at anchor in St Michael’s Bay, and the party were lounging astern on rugs and cushions. Seroza was a puzzling girl : she attached herself specially to Miranda, and did small services for her, and seemed by instinct to divine what she wanted. She did not like to be out of her sight. She waited on her at table, made herself her lady’s-maid, and understood her signs when she could understand no others.

“ How do you account for it, Tom ? ” Miranda would say ; and his answer would be—

“ I never heard of anybody who could account for anything, child. But you are both waifs of the sea, and I suppose were mermaids together ; so she recognises you.”

All sea-born and sea-dwelling folk are superstitious. No wonder ; for the eternal life of the sea and its glorious loneliness ennable and vivify the imagination. Its measured motion reminds the voyager of

God's presence. Its illimitable solitude reminds the voyager that he is in God's hand. Neither of these thoughts seems to come so forcibly in crowded towns, or even in wild country.

Miranda, being superstitious, began to think that this deaf and dumb girl was sent as a special gift to her. Can such things be? Is the world a mere machine, working by accident? or is it the careful work of an Omnipotent Spirit who guides every movement of it? Believers in the former theory can scarcely take much interest in existence, seeing that they are utterly devoid of will. Thoughts like these ran vaguely through our Miranda's little brain. Many another brain, little and great, has been and will be puzzled with them. The fuss mock-metaphysicians make over them is just like that which mock-mathematicians make over the quadrature of the circle. The radius and the circumference are incommensurable: will and fate are incommensurable.

Everybody was fond of Seroza, who, notwithstanding her physical deficiency, was evidently of quick intellect and most loving

temperament. Everybody liked her, and she served everybody; but to Miranda she was a willing slave. Often thought Miranda—

“I hope grandpapa will make her talk. I *do* want to find out where in the world she came from.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

UP THE QUEEN OF RIVERS.

“Tiber’s a history and Nile’s a mystery’
Of the past, and Thames a glory and a beauty
Of this strong time ; but Amazon’s a prophecy
Of a great future utterly unguessable.”

—*Trimeters of Philopotamos.*

AMAZON was ascended to the roots of Andes. All voyagers were pleased. Tix and Tom had the adventure they loved ; for they reached the river-mouth about the time of full moon, and the tremendous bore, that we have on a small scale in our Severn, met them with full force, and they would not have escaped utter wreck but for the Viscount’s admirable management of his clever little craft. Miranda taught Ella to enjoy almost

as well as herself the absolute isolation of the sea. Seroza became a thoroughly accepted member of the party ; enslaved by Miranda, she knew by an inexplicable instinct what to do for her, when she wanted her, when she wanted her away. On torrid summer nights, they kept festival on deck, cool and joyous, while the *Palinoura*, aided by the east wind, swiftly steamed up the rapid river. Tix used to make wild rhymes, which Miranda sang to her guitar, while Tom imperturbably smoked, and Ella criticised.

“ What shall we do with Seroza ? ” said Tom.

“ O I mean to have her,” replied Miranda. “ You can see that she is my slave. I mean to take her home, make grandpapa cure her dumbness, and then find somebody to marry her.”

“ A grand notion,” said Tom. “ I don’t object. She’s a charming little creature, and I should be uncommonly glad to solve her mystery. But, O dear me ! women are so much like rivers.”

The *Palinoura* did her duty well upon the

Amazon, and our honeymoon wanderers enjoyed their time. Many adventures they had, which there is here no space to describe. Alas ! they found no Amazons. It was a real disappointment. They talked about it very seriously one night on deck, as they were steaming down stream at a tremendous pace, with that fresh current, on their way homeward.

For the Viscount wanted to see Tixover Hall, and Tom wanted to see Rothescamp-on-the-Hill, and Miranda wanted to see her father and grandfather. She felt that she hardly knew her grandfather yet.

When an American humourist is ironically sentimental over “the tomb of Adam,” he is showing incapacity to understand a very true feeling, happily less rare among Englishmen than other Europeans. An Arab is proud of his descent from Ishmael. Thackeray laughed at the “Peerage,” as the “Bible of the middle classes.” Yet what does that show ? Simply that there is among the English folk a love of race. Better surely than the worship of—

“ Mammon, the least-erected spirit that fell
From heaven ; for even in heaven his looks and thoughts

Were always downward bent, admiring more
The riches of heaven's pavement—trodden gold—
Than aught divine or holy else enjoyed
In vision beatific."

Now, while I heartily approve of a man's reverencing his father and mother, so far as the feeling of reverence can be called up now-a-days (and it is really almost as difficult as burning phosphorus *in vacuo*), I also think that his parents' parents are worth some consideration. Nor that alone ; the lineage of other people is a thing worth noting, if there be anything in the ancient saying, *Noblesse oblige*.

I believe in *race*. The fountain or origin of a great nation or a great family was a great man. I desire to trace back to that great man in all cases. Those who laugh at the genealogist, the investigator of pedigrees, should consider what he is trying to do.

Miranda.—“I don't believe there are any Amazons. I should so like to bring one home and show her to the feminine populace.”

Tom.—“You can't prove a negative, I was taught at school. I daresay there are plenty of them, only you could not succeed in finding them.”

Ella.—“Faith, if you can’t find them they *must* exist. It’s the truest things that are the most difficult to discover.”

Tom.—“Truth itself, for example, which lies at the bottom of a well.”

Tix.—“It has often occurred to me that there is some mysterious meaning in this old saying. For how can truth lie at all—whether at the bottom of a well or the top of an Alp. Hallo ! By Jove ! what’s this ?”

A canoe flashed across the water at this moment—its occupants a man and a dog. The Viscount caused the *Palinoura* to stop her engine, as it seemed clear the stranger wanted to attract attention. He came alongside at once, and Tix ordered some of his crew to look after his canoe while he came on board.

The Canoeist.—“Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Where is the captain ?”

Tix.—“I’m your man. And, by Jove ! I know who *you* are.”

Canoeist.—“You do ?”

Tix.—“Come, do you remember Guy Luttrell, whom you carried away to the lion-

haunted inland of Africa ? He's First Minister now."

Canoeist.—“The devil he is ! Has anything else happened since I have been exploring Central America ? But who are you, remembering me so well ? I have a half-recollection of you.”

Tix.—“O I was a boy when I saw you at the ‘Chandos,’ and admired you reverently at a distance. The great traveller was to me an object of profound worship, and I was horrified when somebody said—‘That’s O. O.’”

O. O..—“I see you know me. I am pretty well worked out. That upper region of the Amazon, where you get into the Andes, is hard travel, and I have been at it for six years. Are you going home ?”

Tix.—“Yes, and will take you if you like. Haul up the canoe, Morris. We’ll take you just where you please.”

O. O..—“It was lucky to meet you. I was in a regular quandary.”

Ella.—“Tix always *is* lucky—never luckier than when he met you to-day, Mr Olifaunt—you and your dog.”

O. O.—“Why, how do you happen to know anything about either me or my old dog? whom I have named Bony—partly for his love of bones, partly because he gets so uncommonly like a canine skeleton when he and I have stalked a thousand miles together. That reminds me, by the way, that perhaps he is hungry.”

Tix.—“I hope there’s dinner for both of you just ready. I ordered it when you came on board, knowing well you must be hungry. How long is it since you tasted a Strasbourg pie?”

CHAPTER XIX.

O. O. ON BOARD THE "PALINOURA."

" Strasbourg tire vanité
De ses pâtes de foies ;
Cette superbe cité
Ne doit sa prosperité
Qu' aux oies."

OLIVER OLIFAUNT, with Strasbourg pie and other excellent good things before him, soon broke into liveliness. He was much altered since Tix saw him last. His face was bronze; his unshorn hair was snow. His courage was as daring as ever; his wrist and shoulder as strong; his thirst for adventure as great. Still one wants *home* now and then; wants the desired bed of Catullus; wants just a little rest. O. O., as all men know who know him, desires to explore the whole earth. His last

attempt had been upon certain points in the Andes, and to find forgotten cities which he had always believed to exist in strange corners of the South American continent. All the wonders he found cannot be mentioned here ; they will doubtless be chronicled when he publishes his travels. He told his new friends in confidence that he found a few Amazons. When he had finished his meal, and had time for conversation, he described an adventure or two.

" There 's an old city," said O. O., " cut in solid rock like Petra, but with deep caverns in the rock, where you might lose yourself in five minutes. The aboriginal people seem to have been fond of darkness and coolness ; and certainly it *is* rather bright and hot in that neighbourhood. I was alone ; my only companion my deerhound Bony, who sticks to me with doggish resolve. He 's the most wonderful fellow on four legs I ever saw. I can live on as little as most men when its necessary, though I also like a good meal as well as most men ; but Bony will live on nothing for a length of time that passes my experience of either man or dog."

“Good Bony!” said Miranda, patting the head of O. O.’s friend, who was at that time feeding luxuriously.

“I suppose you found some curious relics in your ancient city,” said Tom.

“There were many that I hope to return and claim. The expedition would not be a difficult one.”

“Does it not seem a shame,” said Ella, “to remove the monuments of ancient days from their place? Byron thought so.”

“Byron was right,” said Tix; “but—

‘Venus half removed Minerva’s shame.’

Byron’s objection does not apply here, for Elgin robbed a civilised country, while Oli-faunt talks only of taking memorials from a deserted and forgotten city.”

“The only thing I have brought away,” said O. O., “I can show you now; but there are multitudinous other things for which the British Museum and South Kensington will be striving with outstretched necks.”

“Ah!” said the Viscount, “I can foresee your coming triumph. London will be mad about you, and all other English cities. You

will come before the Geographical Society like Herodotus in a dress-coat."

"Not a dress-coat, by all the gods," said O. O.

"Well, black velvet, let us say," continued the invulnerable Tix, "the sort of thing Disraeli and Lord Lytton wore in their hot youth. You will be the most popular man in England. You will be adored by ladies ; implored to lecture ; bored by newspaper people. The *Times* and *Telegraph* and *Standard* will try which can make most of you. There will be heaps of simultaneous leaders beginning,—' *Our great traveller has returned, having discovered the source of the Amazon, and the Amazons who live near its source.*' Your life will be a perpetual blaze of glory!"

"Till some greater fool turns up," said O. O. "I know the sort of thing perfectly well."

"O but do show us what you have brought," said Ella ; "never mind newspapers and societies. What's your discovery ? Don't baffle our curiosity ; ladies cannot stand it. We shan't believe you

unless you give us definite proof of your adventures."

"I cannot resist," said O. O., "so absolute a command."

He took from a pocket-case an article of antique jewelry. It was a brooch ; the centre a cameo representing one of those immobile faces we see in Nineveh sculpture, the outer rim alternate sapphires and amethysts, the setting platinum. The ladies admired it, as only ladies can admire the light and colour which were petrified to beautify them. Even Seroza's eyes brightened as she held it in her hand.

"I could not have believed," said Sir Harold, "that the lapidary art existed to this perfection in a forgotten city of an extinct race. Can there be no mistake ? "

"None," he replied. "There are far more wonderful things in those subterranean palaces. To explore them alone would be impossible, for it is necessary to guard against pitfalls and foul air, and the natives dare not follow you, believing the caves to be haunted by unimaginable horrors. I mean to go back

with a gang of stout Englishmen—fellows who fear nothing."

"I'll lend you the *Palinoura* when you are inclined to go out again," said the Viscount. "My crew will go anywhere. I'll come with you, if my wife will let me."

"Not alone," said Ella.

"Do you mean to be always sailing round the world, Tix?" said Tom Jones. "Consider, you are now married and settled; you must think of the coming heir of Tixover—Oh-h!"

That exclamation was produced by simultaneous pinches from the two ladies, who sate on each side of him.

"Well," said Tix, standing middeck and out of danger, "my coming heir must take his chance. My father treated me coolly enough; gave me Eton and Oxford, and money to travel; used to say boys were a nuisance, and ought to keep out of the way. The only important interview ever I had with him was when he caught me on the stairs kissing a servant-maid, whereupon he had me into his study, and paternally admonished me."

"You wicked boy!" exclaimed Ella.

“ I hope the admonition was eloquent,” said Tom Jones.

“ It took the form of a riding-whip,” said Tix. “ I haven’t kissed a servant-girl since.”

“ Don’t begin again,” said Ella, “ or I shall have to borrow a riding-whip.”

Said Miranda—

“ While you talk all this nonsense, what lots of pleasant romantic stories Mr Oliphant might be telling us! Don’t waste time.”

“ You are right, Lady Tachbrook,” said Tix. “ Odysseus Olifaunt shall tell us stories. Give him tobacco. Teach Seroza, the mysterious, to fill his pipe and bring him cooling drinks. Now, Olifaunt, tell us some of the stories you mean to tell at the Chandos Club late o’ nights, when incredulous villains are snoring on luxurious couches. How about the Amazons ?”

“ Hussies !” said the great traveller, oracularly.

“ O then you have seen them,” said Tom.

“ Seen them ! I had hard matter to get out of their clutches. I killed two ; but there are plenty more, I am sorry to say. The Emperor of Brazil ought to put them down.”

"Are you serious?" said Tom Jones.

"Is *this* serious?" asked O. O., baring his arm, and showing an impression of very keen teeth. "That was the work of an infuriate Amazon who attacked me. They hold an almost impregnable position on a spur of the Andes, and have for immemorial centuries carried out the theory—which some people think new—that woman is superior to man. They kill most of their male children at their birth, so the ladies have always a majority."

"Unfortunately," said Ella, "they are in a majority in England without infanticide."

"Let us form a society for the importation of Amazons," said Tix. "They would teach our learned ladies a lesson. Could we get a few, Olifaunt, to bring home in the yacht?"

"Easily! The queen will sell you any number for a few coral or glass necklaces. They do not care for much clothing, and are usually content with a few beads round the waist."

"You will astonish the R.G.S.," said Tix. "I shall be there when you deliver your Odyssey. Tell us something else; it shall be quite confidential."

“ You talk about the ‘ *Odyssey*,’ ” returned O. O. “ Do you know, I have formed the conclusion—which I really wish to be confidential, as I want to embody my views in a well-considered paper—that *Odysseus* or *Ulysses* must have been in America. I think so because I find traces of what he found there.”

“ This sounds amazing,” said Sir Harold.

“ The words *Amazon* and *amaze* are connected,” said Tix. “ An *Amazon* in Greek meant an amazing woman.”

“ Dear me ! ” said Miranda ; “ how long is this learned talk to last ? Tell us some more of your wonderful stories, Mr Olifaunt, else I declare I ’ll make Ella sing in Irish.”

“ I ’ll obey you, lady of the sea,” said the Viscountess. “ If I ’m mistress of the yacht, you ’re daughter and mistress of the ocean. What shall I sing by way of reproach to the story-teller who won’t tell stories. Will this do ? —

‘ There once was a traveller known, ohone !
 Who went off and wandered alone, ohone !
 His tales of Ulysses
 And hussies with kisses
 Had rather a tropical tone, ohone ! ’ ”

“ Go on,” said O. O. “ That ’s charm-

ing! I should like to put it in my great book, when it appears, if it ever should, with a sketch of you on the deck of the *Palinoura* singing it."

"I think I'll take up the parable," said Tom Jones, and went off, to the air of the "Widow Malone," or something dimly resembling it:—

"He has found an American Troy, my boy,
And the Amazons weren't at all coy, my boy;
And his fancy environs
The voyage with sirens,
That enamour this broth of a boy, my boy."

"Tom," said Miranda, "you will never be a poet. I could have done better than that myself."

"Try!" quoth Tom.

Miranda bravely answered the challenge:—

"You have been away many a day, O. O. !
You have often been awfully gay, ho ! ho !
When, solemn and prolix,
You tell all your frolics,
I can hear all the Londoners say 'Oh ! Oh !'"

"Best skolion of the three," said Tix.

"If the Geographical get hold of me," said O. O., "I shall be worn to a skeleton in a month—they'll plague me so. I quite dread

the notion. Just fancy, after having spoken about six words of English a year in six years, having to stand up and expound and explain to a lot of ladies and gentlemen who are dreadfully bored, and who don't know Africa from America, or latitude from longitude!"

"Well," said Tix, "why the devil should you let these people bore you, or even know that you are in England? Come and stay with me or Tachbrook, and don't trouble yourself about the public until you feel disposed to reveal yourself. Think of the sensation when it is announced that the great traveller Olifaunt is at Lord Tixover's seat in Rutland, while an expedition has for some years been endeavouring to find him on the Isthmus of Darien!"

"I'll think of your offer," said the traveller. "It certainly would be amusing to be quietly in England, while everybody thought one elsewhere. Of course, I wouldn't let an expedition be sent out after me, but I'd keep quiet just for a time, to escape the frightful gusts of sudden notoriety. I should like it to be announced that I had been in England from

a certain date, and was about to leave England for further exploration *this day*."

"A capital notion," said Sir Harold. "We have lots of room at Rothescamp, and you can stay as long as you like. After geographical exploring, a man should not be hurried. It will give you time to get your maps in order, and your irregular notes about people and things. I have lots of geographical literature about the place, and you can live in the library, and Dr Septimus Tachbrook, my dear old relation, will give you *periplus* upon *periplus*."

"Tempting!" said O. O.

"I'm sure you'll come," said Lady Tachbrook, "so I won't use any arguments. And we can keep you quite snug in Rothescamp, it is such a lonely place."

"And for a change there's Tixover," said Tix. "I'm not often there, but the last note I had from my gardener just before leaving England was that my pines would beat the world."

"O, I adore pines," said Ella.

"They *are* nice," said Miranda. "I pine for pines."

“Sing me one song to the guitar,” said Tix, “and you shall never be without a pine so long as I can grow one.”

Miranda complied.

“Down the rapid stream we flash,
 You and I together ;
Is it not a little rash,
 In such sultry weather ?

“Blush of rose on cheek of snow
 Thereto this reply went—
‘I would go where you would go ;
 You would go where I went.

“I would go where you would go,
 Having tied love’s true knot,’
Says the pretty child, ‘although
 All the world say, *Do not !*’”

CHAPTER XX.

SEPTIMUS TACHBROOK, M.D., F.R.S., F.R.G.S., ETC.

“*Memini me turribus altis . . .
Corycium vidisse senem.*”

“*That old Corsican gentleman I knew.*”—BLACKMORE.

DOCTOR TACHBROOK and his son Harold were at this time passing a very quiet and pleasant life—uneventful, except so far as they made events for themselves. Harold had taken the responsibility of managing his cousin's estates in his absence, much to the benefit of landlord, tenantry, peasantry. Both Rothes-camps—the higher and the lower—felt the good done by his wise administration of affairs. Knowing that he could act for his old friend precisely as if he were acting for himself, he carried out any reforms which

his father and he, holding council together, deemed desirable. By most of those alterations the villagers in the main were well satisfied, though slightly astonished at first.

Doctor Tachbrook, during his son's long absence, had lived very quietly, sometimes visiting London to read and hear read recondite papers at learned meetings; sometimes receiving some erudite friend, and discussing with him after-dinner problems as intangible as the bee's wing in his old port. What delight has happy youth in blowing bubbles that rise, coruscate, float, dissolve into the sunny hyaline! Just such delight have men to whom science has become a toy in blowing the bubbles of science—in talking over those unsettled questions which arise with every lift in the level of human knowledge. To see the dear old Doctor and some able acquaintance as they talked about things of the most abstruse character was a delight to Harold. To paint them would have been a delight to Rembrandt.

He would have a great astronomer, and argue with him on what is called the "plurality of worlds," and maintain that Jupiter may

be warmer than Mercury, since heat, like motion, may obey a law analogous to Kepler's third law. "Heat *is* motion," he would say; "and the farther the planet, the faster it moves. Imagine life in Saturn, with its three radiant rings and its eight moons! Summer and winter there are divided by fifteen years; but the day is only ten hours and a half, which seems to prove that where people live fastest they live longest. If you take the farthest away of all the planets we know, Neptune, the only moon whose motion has been observed whirls round him in five days, while Uranus has a moon that completes its voyage in two days. But Saturn is my favourite: one of its moons gets round in less than a day, two others in very little more, and the slowest mover takes between two and three months. If I lived in Saturn it would drive me to learn astronomy."

Thus also would Doctor Septimus talk to antiquaries, classics, mathematicians, chemists, botanists, zoologists. He looked for *idea* in all science. "It is there, I know," he would say; "and where there is idea, you trace the

hand of God. I cannot tolerate the dull fools who think they solve everything by leaving God out of the system. When He drops, the stars will drop. The world is His idea. Bacon saw it. '*Quod in natura naturata lex in natura naturante idea dicitur.*'"

As the Doctor waxed old he took to epigrams, for the older men get the more condensed should become the food of both mind and body. It is supposed that some day he will allow them, in Greek, Latin, and English, to be published for private circulation. To offer them to the general reading public would be simply absurd ; but there will be good luck for the happy publisher who gets hold of "Oliver Olifaunt's *Odyssey*." The only Septimian epigram I am allowed to copy was a hit at Harold :—

"We fain would know, and yet can only guess ;
Our wildest ventures are by failure crowned.
My son goes round the world, and sees far less
Than I, who wait, and let the world go round."

One day there was no common arrival at the Doctor's house. The old gentleman, leaning on Harold's arm, was loitering in the sunshine up and down the pavement beneath the pollard limes, when a couple of post-

chaises came dashing up the street, distracting unaccustomed villagers. Such procession seldom amazed the Rothescamp folk. The voyagers had been lucky enough to get horses at a large station on a railway, whose branch line only approached Rothescamp ; but the inn at this point was well known to the omniscient Tix, being one where many a time he had invited his friends to dine after a row (the *o long*) ; and the landlord was so glad to see the Viscount at home again, that he would gladly have horsed him for nothing. It was perhaps unfortunate that four of the horses were white, being intended for hymeneal purposes, and four black, their customary occupation being funereal ; and it was even more unfortunate that they were rather oddly arranged—three white and the off leader black ; three black and the near leader white. Tix was foremost to laugh at the arrangement.

“ My Cockney tenantry in Tixover Lane would exclaim, ‘ That’s a Wicount, that is ! ’ ”

“ Tixover Lane ! ” said Ella—it was just as they were starting from Kenton Station —“ where in the world is that ? ”

“ O you shall go and see Tixover Lane,

my pet. I bought it by auction. It is E.C.—easter than most E.C.'s. It was called Narrowsmith Lane, a gentleman with that name having built cottages of the most wretched description there. I bought it. I went and saw the people and the houses. I rebuilt it. On so narrow a strip of land it was impossible to do much ; but there are twelve cottages, six on each side, and a fragment of garden ground fore and aft. It's one of the most profitable properties I 've got."

" How so ?" asked Tom.

" Why they're so devilish glad to see me when I go that way, which is not always the case when landlord and tenant meet. There are two or three things I am determined they shall have—plenty of light and air and water, and good sound beer brewed from malt and hops."

" You are doing a wise thing," said O. O. " I wish a few other people would do it, and make the populace content. Latimer says in one of his sermons, ' there were never so many gentlemen and so little gentleness.' The gentleness of gentlemen is the salt of the earth."

“ How in the world are the poor to improve their position if the rich won’t help them ? ” said Tom Jones. “ By Jove, I ’d give my whole estate—and they say it ’s twenty thousand a year—to make the people on it live happily. I can live happily anywhere on anything. I can fell trees or herd cattle with any man, and exist on bacon and beer.”

“ There you touch the difficulty,” said the Viscount. “ You, having culture and experience of the world, are aware that you could be as happy, and might be happier, as Tom Jones with your living to get, as in the capacity of Sir Harold Tachbrook, Baronet, with no end of people depending on you. I am entirely of your opinion. I am disgusted at being born a peer with an estate. But, you see, the two classes of people look at life through opposite ends of the telescope. Take a poor man—a labourer on my estate—with eighteen shillings a week and his cottage and garden and orchard. He sees me drive by in a mail-phaeton and pair, and he thinks life to me is all beer and skittles. Why shouldn’t he have a mail-phaeton and pair ? ”

“ I shall go and lecture those mutinous

labourers of yours, Tix," said Ella, "and show them they are better off than their master."

"That's a hard saying," quoth Tix, meditatively. "O now I see. Them you will lecture now and then—me every day."

We have retrogressed : let us return to the arrival at Dr Tachbrook's. He and Harold knew well what it meant when this unusual equipage arrived. Miranda was the first to reach the ground and salute her father and grandfather. Glad were they to see the merry creature—a child although a wife. Ella's brogue was more delicious than usual when she told the oldest of the Tachbrooks how delighted she was to see him again. Tom Jones had tears in his eyes as he wrenched his old comrade's hand. Tix, always thoughtful, took charge of Seroza, and brought her up to the Doctor, and, when other matters were over, said quietly—

"She is deaf and dumb."

Doctor Tachbrook was at once intensely interested. He felt her pulse, looked into her eyes, seemed to forget everything about the arrival of the head of his house and his

grand-daughter in his sudden absorption. Meanwhile, where was Oliver Olifaunt ?

Two things had struck the explorer—he was athirst, and he thought the bells ought to ring on the baronet's return. He saw clearly that there would be too much interchange of sentiment to coexist with the idea of refreshment. Study of locality in England was not new to him ; when he saw a village, he could guess exactly where to find the village church and the village inn ; and he knew that the village bellringers would be within easy call of the latter. O. O. had not travelled in America and Asia and Africa for nothing. His instinct drew him to the “Tachbrook Arms,” where Sandy Mac supplied all he wanted, and as he returned to Dr Tachbrook's the bells burst out with the merriest of peals. You might have thought they remembered their ancient benefactor. You might hear the pious crusader's gold in them. •

Voltaire has an epigram against bell-ring-
ing, wherein he wishes the ringers had round
their necks what they hold in their hands ;
and the wish has probably been echoed many

a time when the clash and clangour of bells have been prolonged beyond the endurance of weak nerves. Yet is there no other mode of music which so nobly announces to the world either sorrow or joy. When it fills the air with sounds of welcome, the very vibration makes the spirits of men jubilant. Those golden throbs from Rothescamp's ancient tower were the fittest music to greet the wanderers on their return.

Doctor Tachbrook was still interested in Seroza when the bells broke out so suddenly upon the air. The sound made her start ; her lips seemed to try to articulate ; the Doctor watched her intensely as she stood in a listening attitude with lips half open. A moment more and she said, with a smile—

“What beautiful bells !”

Yes! to every one's amazement, Seroza spoke, in a low soft voice like Cordelia's.

“I think I can guess the meaning of your silence, my dear,” said the old Doctor, speaking slowly. “You have been frightened, have you not ?”

“Yes, terribly frightened. I cannot tell you now,” she said, with a shudder.

"No: there is plenty of time. You shall tell us all about it when you feel more at home."

"O," she said, "I feel more at home now than I have since papa died."

CHAPTER XXI.

SEROZA'S STORY.

“Ελάλησεν η κωφός.” *The dumb spoke*

SEROZA became in a few days courageous enough to tell her story. Sir Harold and Miranda had, of course, taken up their abode at Rothescamp-on-the-Hill. Olifaunt did not go with them as was proposed, for Doctor Tachbrook and he fell in love at first sight, and he willingly remained. As Harold the elder passed most of his time with Tom Jones and his daughter, the companionship of O. O. was a resource to the Doctor. Tix stayed at Rothescamp but a day, and then rushed off with his Irish Viscountess to Tix-over Hall, determined to take his neighbours and tenants by surprise.

One day at noon the Doctor and the traveller were having a garden-talk, while Seroza flitted up and down—a white-apparelled nymph—among the trees and flowers. It was the time when the young robins grow red-breasted, and begin to sing and fight ; the time when leafage is heavy and dark, and noon is empty of music, and the cuckoo a vanished voice ; the time when thousands of reapers are at work in the yellow wheat-fields of merry England, and the glory of harvest testifies to the goodness of God.

“ After all,” said Olifaunt, who had been looking through his diary, “ it is pleasant to be back in England again, when one has been in so many strange countries for years.”

“ Have you decided to publish your *Odyssey* ? ” asked the Doctor.

“ Yes ; but not yet. It will take me a long time to get into proper form such a mass of undigested notes as I have—*farrago libelli*. Sometimes I wrote on scraps of paper in a kind of self-invented shorthand, to save both space and time. The transcription of those hasty jottings will occupy weeks. Meanwhile, I want to be left alone. The worst of it is, I

am daily afraid those fussy people will be organising an expedition in search of me, and I could not well let them do that. And if once I am found out, they won't leave me a minute alone."

"Keep incognito as long as you can. Nobody here will betray it. Rest, after all your marvellous adventures, must be not only pleasant but necessary. At the same time, the habit of wandering lessens the fatigue of wandering."

"Yes ; and it also lessens the danger. Your instincts increase. Your presence of mind becomes wonderful ; you seem to know instantaneously what to do if face to face with hostile tribes, or dangerous beasts, or difficult passes of mountain or river. People at home, who write letters in newspapers, begin to think you lost after a year or two, unaware that there is twice as much danger in Piccadilly as on the Amazon. And then they lionise you. I suppose some fellows like it ; but they shall not catch me this time, if there's any way to avoid it. I go out to see the world, and don't want to talk about it to crowds of people, who only want something

fresh to amuse their vacant minds, and would as lief rush to look at a gorilla or a mermaid."

" Talking of mermaids, our maid of the sea there ought to be ready now to tell her story. Shall we try her?"

The trial was made. Seroza was quite ready. She sat on a low garden-chair, and began her narrative methodically. While wandering alone about the garden for these few days, she had been telling it over and over to herself, and had arranged the incidents in their proper order.

" I remember," she said, " a pretty little house called Millbrook. It was in Devonshire. There I was a little child with papa and mamma. Papa had been in the army, but retired because some property was left him: he was called Colonel Wallis. Mamma was younger than he, I know, and was very small and pretty. She seemed to me more like my sister than my mother when I was old enough to think about it. Papa treated us both like children: he spoilt her, and they both spoilt me. I don't think I ever learnt a lesson in my life, because I didn't like lessons.

“ I think I was about fifteen when a man of about thirty used to come and stay at Mill-brook. He was the son of a friend of papa’s who had been unfortunate, and was now in the merchant service. I don’t think papa liked him, but he was kind to him for the sake of his old friend. He was a short stout black-bearded man, and his name was Ragget.

“ I hated him. I was only a child, but he used to pretend to make love to me. Once when he kissed me I pulled his beard till some of it came off in my hands. Then all the time, when papa was away, I could see that he was making love to mamma as well, and that she rather liked it. How she could, I can’t think. Papa was tall and as straight as a dart, and to see him on horseback was like a picture : but this Ragget — Captain Ragget he called himself — was an ugly mean-looking man, who always seemed ashamed of himself. Yet mamma used to like him.

“ Papa had some suspicion at last, and would not have him at the house. Then mamma got ill. I don’t know what might have happened, but the worst thing did hap-

pen that possibly could for me: poor papa had a fall out hunting, and broke his collar-bone, and died in about a fortnight. Mamma was in terrible distress; but I think she was pleased when she found that papa had left her all his money, only just saying that he was sure she would take care of me.

“ He had not been buried a month before Captain Ragget was about the place, and wonderfully civil to me as well as her; and she grew quite lively, and used to go out with him a great deal. I began to see what it meant. I grew quite angry about it. To think of mamma’s liking that dreadful man after my dear papa! It made me mad. I told her so one day, not thinking she had gone so far as she had; and she burst into tears, and said I was a cruel wicked ungrateful girl, and that papa was much too old for her. And then she told Captain Ragget, who gave me an insolent look, but only said—

“ ‘ She is a child yet, Mary, my dear. She will be wiser in time.’

“ They married, and left me at Milbrook under charge of a governess, whom he of course had chosen—an awful gaunt woman,

who wore blue spectacles, and made me learn all sorts of dry stuff, and go to bed at eight o'clock. I resisted at first, but she used to shake me; and I assure you, to be shaken by her was terrible. I couldn't tell what had become of my brains.

"When they came back, I could see at once mamma was changed. She looked perfectly miserable. When he and the governess happened to be out of the way, she managed to make me understand that Captain Ragget was a brute; and indeed I soon found it so.

"He treated us both cruelly. He gave us scarcely enough to eat, and that of the coarsest sort. The servants would not stay; even his own governess went away; and then he got a couple of seafaring men into the house—not English, but half black—who did all the work of the place. Mamma and I were never allowed to pass the gates; he was afraid we should never come back. He used to strike both mamma and me whenever we offended him. I could see she was gradually giving way under it; that perhaps was what he wanted,

for he ill-used her cruelly. At last she died.

"I don't know how to describe my feelings when I lost her. To console her had soothed me. Now I was in the power of this dreadful wretch, and there was no one I could ask to help me. I was half mad for days; but I prayed, and my prayer seemed to give me faith. As to Captain Ragget, he was drunk for weeks, and left me alone. By and by he sent for me, and I found him in what had been papa's favourite room. The pretty furniture was all broken, and defaced with the stains of what they drank; and he had with him three or four more sailors, all smoking dreadfully strong tobacco, that made me feel quite faint.

"Now, you proud minx," he said, "I've time to attend to you. I'm going on a cruise. Would you like to go with me, or to stay in England and be sent to school?"

"I told him I should like to go, for I saw by the threatening look in his eye that he meant me to say that, and that I should have to go at any rate. He simply told me to be ready for to-morrow, and I was dismissed.

“We went on board ship—I don’t know where—and had a beautiful voyage; and he left me pretty well alone, I enjoyed it as well as I could enjoy anything. The sea was calm and the weather warm; and I could sit and look at the water, and think of poor dear papa and mamma.

“One day the ship lay to, and a boat was lowered, and he told me to get into it. He was so unusually civil, that I feared he meant some mischief. He told me he wanted to land on the island—it was the island where you found me—and that it would do me good to go ashore. The idea of his wishing to do me good was enough to prove that he wanted to do me harm.

“He rowed me ashore by himself. I looked back on the ship, as it lay with its sails idly furled, with a melancholy feeling that I should not see it again—and it seemed a little like a home. When we came on the island we walked about a little. He smoked—I picked fruit. Suddenly he said—

“‘Now, Miss Peevish, I am going to give you a lesson.’

“He caught hold of me and threw me on

the ground. I was a child in his arms. I thought myself utterly lost. There I was on the ground, no creature within hearing, his strong grasp holding me down. At the moment I feared the worst a pistol dropped from his pocket. I snatched at it, and pulled the trigger without thinking which way the shot would go; but it wounded Ragget, and he fell back on the grass. Then I suppose I fainted.

“ I must have been faint a long time. When I came to myself, the brig was not in the offing, and Ragget was nowhere to be seen. The pistol lay by my side, and there was blood on the grass, which, when I recovered, I traced at intervals down to the shore. After that I was on the island I don’t know how long, but I found fruit to eat and water to drink, and was happy enough. I did not know I could not speak till I was found there by your friends, and I feared I should never speak again. But those lovely bells reminded me of some that dear papa was fond of in a great cathedral, and somehow I managed to speak. That is all.”

She was flushed and tired with her long story.

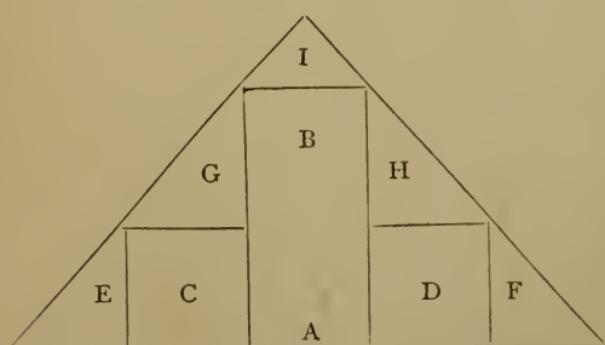
“ I have known similar cases,” said the Doctor to O. O. “ That Ragget ought to be exterminated. I shall set Tixover at him.”

CHAPTER XXII.

TIXOVER HALL.

“ Malbrouck s’en va-t-en guerre,
Mi ron ton, ton ton, mi ron taine.”

TIXOVER HALL is an Elizabethan house, with three courts or quadrangles, called respectively the Garden Court, the Cloisters, and the Stable Court. They are arranged so that the three squares, which are equal, produce on the outside an equilateral triangle. It may thus be roughly described:—



A is the great entrance, leading to *B*, the mews, where carriages are received. *C* is the summer court, with pleasant rooms all round it, and a croquet-ground at *E*—a croquet-ground dedicated to flirtation. *D* is the bachelor's cloister, snug for winter, with bowling-green and billiard-rooms and other eccentricities at *F*. *G* and *H* are devoted to bath-rooms and tennis-courts. *I* is the place where the servants talk scandal.

Tixover's father had built this wonderful mansion. It was very enjoyable. On the first floor he had placed a great hall, forty feet high, and of superb dimension, and at one corner of the building was a tower, three hundred feet high, from whose summit might be seen all the boundaries of England's smallest county.

Ella was perfectly delighted when she first came to Tixover—as delighted as everybody was to see her. The merry Irish lass won all hearts at once. The Viscount's dependents were all in love with her. She was quite courteous without loss of dignity. She liked to know everybody, and to talk to them easily. It was enchantment for her to live

such a life ; to be lady of a great manor, and mistress of a great household, and able to do good at any moment to any one. It gave her infinite pleasure to think that these things were in her power. Tixover let her do just as she liked, and if she made any mistakes, it is as well to remember that Eve began the world by making a mistake.

What is the most maddening thing in the world ? It depends—to a statesman, talk ; to a tradesman, debt ; to an author, paper. If I could only get paper fit for a human being to write upon, it would increase my income by several hundreds a year. The makers will glaze, varnish, nastify paper to such an extent that writing on it is a perfect nuisance. Pens are as bad : since the villainous steel-pen was invented, a good sound goose-quill is undiscoverable.

On a certain morning Tix and Ella were sitting at breakfast in a favourite bay window of the great hall, which suited August weather. Happy were they ; but the Viscount—restless rascal !—seemed to think it was time he made a move. Ella was lazy, and declined to be suggestive.

“ If I live to a hundred,” said Tix, “ I suppose I shall like lobster for breakfast. At present I just tolerate it. Have some tail, Ella.”

“ Claw, please.”

“ Well, I do like that style, young ’un,” says Tix. “ Two monosyllables in return for all my attention.”

“ Hot,” says Ella. “ Tix talks for two.”

As she sat in a light morning-gown, all cool and prettily flowered, she looked the very goddess of laziness, if such goddess there be. Tix gave her the cock lobster’s bigger claw, and helped himself to tail, and said—

“ Ella, my pet, you have given me a new view of Irish character. I had no idea anybody of your race could say so much in so few words.”

“ Idea is Irish,” she said ; “ eloquence is English.”

“ I must think over that great question. Ah! there’s the postman coming up the avenue. Any news, I wonder ?”

Shortly the letters were brought up—a heap—which the Viscount did not open. Two of perhaps twenty were all looked at on that

day—one from Doctor Tachbrook to Tix, the other from Miranda to Ella. Both, in far different ways, told Seroza's story.

Can you imagine Tix? Nothing was to him so abominable as the ill treatment of a woman. It made him absolutely shudder.

"I'll trace that fellow," he said.

"What's the use?" said Ella; "the child is happy enough now. What good can you do?"

"Punish *him*," said Tix; "and I will."

And as he said it, his face looked so much like that of an avenging angel, that Ella knew he was in earnest, and said nothing more. She wanted to tell him not to trouble himself about such a matter, but to think of her. One glance at his eye and lip sufficed to show the uselessness of remonstrance. She felt a little jealous that the rest of her sex should have some claim on her husband; yet, also, she felt proud that there was one man who could not hear of a woman's being wronged without resolving to avenge her.

"How shall we catch that villain Ragget?" he said to Ella. "I must find that fellow,

my pet. Think how he treated that poor dear little Seroza !”

“ Wretch !” said Ella.

“ Ought not he to be punished for his rascalities ? I wish I ’d been on the island when he attacked that poor child.”

“ Dear Tix, don’t be so fierce,” said Ella. “ I am glad to see you fighting for women, as they can’t fight for themselves. I should sometimes be a little jealous, if I did not know you love me.”

“ My own Ella,” said Tix, “ I love you more than any other woman was ever loved. But I love all women with that love which a true gentleman may have for a lady. And no woman, of whatever rank, shall come to harm in my presence, nor shall harm done be unrevenged if I can revenge it.”

“ You are a very good boy,” said Ella ; “ but I don’t want you to be running about quixotically rescuing distressed damsels for a long period of time. I want some fun.”

“ And you shall have heaps of fun, my beauty. Now come, I ’ll make an agreement with you. If you ’ll promise to let me work out this question about Ragget, I ’ll promise

to obey you for the next year. You shall be absolute mistress."

"O what a lark!" said Ella. "O what a year of liberty and tyranny. In return for that generous promise I will give you a suggestion. Advertise in the *Times* that Captain Ragget may hear of something to his advantage by applying to Mr Rokes of Lincoln's Inn."

"Capital idea!" said the Viscount. "The thing shall be done at once, and I daresay the fellow will be caught."

"You remember your agreement with me as to obedience," said Ella. "Are you afraid? I'll let you off your bargain if you are."

"Most distinctly I am not afraid, Ella mine. You shall have your own way for a year, if you let me have mine now. After that year, we go back to the old legal arrangement whereby the wife is bound to obey the husband."

Lord Tixover took his wife's advice, and advertised in that wonderful second column, where are sown the seeds of many romances —where also one sometimes sees their catastrophes.

Captain Ragget, lounging into the coffee-room of the "White Hart" at Bristol to drink iced sherry and hear the news, had this advertisement shown to him at once. The Captain had not been very fortunate since his attempt on his stepdaughter. She on that occasion had wounded him so severely in the right arm that he could only get back to the ship by sculling astern with his left. He had no care for her.

"The little she-devil!" he said to himself, "let her stay there and starve. I'll go back to England and look out for another fool with money."

On his return voyage the weather changed. The ship was caught in a cyclone. The Captain was on the sick-list, and could give no orders; the first mate lost his head, the vessel was thrown on the rocks by Cape Finisterre, and all hands lost except Ragget and one sailor, a splendid swimmer, who got his rascally master ashore.

Ragget had pretty well spent his wife's money at the time we find him in Bristol; and the sailor who had saved his life was now the terror of it, for he knew all his

secrets, and stuck to him like a leech. So, when he saw this advertisement, he pondered over it. He could not think of any source whence good fortune might come to him ; he was half afraid it was a "plant." Yet he felt that he could not afford to neglect any chance. At the time, *faute de mieux*, he was making love to an elderly young lady who kept a large dressmaking establishment on the steep slope of Park Street, and who was supposed to have made money ; at any rate, she gave Captain Ragget snug little suppers spiced by modest endearments. She was pious, and went to a neighbouring chapel called Bethesda ; the Captain went also, and sang amazing hymns in a more amazing bass. Poor Priscilla Waddams began to think she should convert him.

When he saw this advertisement, his spirits rose, and he began to despise his dressmaker. He wrote off at once to Rokes of Lincoln's Inn ; but he went and took supper and talked a mixture of love and devotion to Miss Waddams that night. The roast-duck had plenty of stuffing, and the schiedam was such as the lady had found her mariner ap-

proved. Yet, when he got out in the moonlight, and swaggered down Park Street, he soliloquised—

“ Damn that dressmaker ! She parts her hair on one side, so I guess she’s bald in the middle. If this lawyer means business, I won’t trouble *her* again.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

BRISTOL.

“ Such a wretch
Can have but one fit punishment, and that
Law, being feeble, disallows.”

HEARING from Rokes that Ragget had risen to his fly, Tixover telegraphed to Rothescamp, asking that some one might bring Seroza and meet him in Bristol. Both the younger Tachbrooks were so busily occupied, one with his wife and estate, and the other with his father and daughter, that O. O. volunteered.

“ If you go, I ’ll go with you,” said Doctor Septimus. “ I have not seen the old city of Bristol since they began to restore St Mary’s, Radcliffe ; since Brunel tried to bridge the Avon, and so spoil Nightingale Valley, famed for its bee and butterfly

orchises. I want to know if the tower of the Temple Church is likely to fall, and so decide a bet made between the Mayor and the landlord of the 'Bush' at least a century ago. My old crony, John Taylor, tallest and most genial of journalists, is gone, I know—gone to some editorial fields of asphodel, where, probably, he will meet Felix Farley, who went long before him. Still I should like to follow his path through the market, where he always bought the meat and vegetables which went so well with his famous old wine. Yes ; I certainly *will* go to Bristol and see how it has changed."

The Doctor had his way, travelling by rail the first time for years, with O. O. and Seroza as companions. Lord Tixover had arranged to meet whoever came at the "White Lion Hotel," which being next door to the "White Hart," where Ragget had given an address, would be convenient for them. Tix got to Bristol with Ella first, secured rooms, made his wife take refreshment and rest, and went out to explore the city whose chief streets are named of wine and corn. Bristol was one of the few English cities of which the Viscount

knew very little, though once he had had a famous adventure there. When he got to an unknown town, it was his wont to sinuously scamander through it, asking no question of any one as to the way he was to go, but occasionally entering inns and shops to pick up character and information. He never entered a new place without a feeling that something would happen. He used to say,—

“ The passion for adventure is just like yeast. I go into a quiet town or village, where nothing has happened for a century, and something happens instantly. I always have an instinctive presentiment of it. I know, as I walk along the thronged streets, and look at the churches and halls, that there is some event awaiting me. I have the destiny on me, and cannot avoid it.”

He fancied something was going to occur in Bristol beyond even the Ragget exposure. He walked down Wine Street, Corn Street, Clare Street, admiring the lovely tower of St Stephen’s as he passed it; crossed the drawbridge, and entering College Green, admired the Cathedral of Harding the Viking, and the oolite arch which divides the two

Greens, and the exquisite beauty of the Mayor's Chapel.

Then he ascended Park Street and went up on the Downs, and saw the bridge given by Thames to Avon, and, crossing it, cooled his eyes on the luxuriant verdure of the woods of Leigh. Avon was full to the brim, which adds immeasurably to the beauty of that unique scenery. Tixover, slowly returning, lighted a cigar, and leaned over the Hungerford balustrade, looking at the sluggish water beneath. It is a fine view. The two shires of Somerset and Gloucester are parted here by a chasm six hundred feet wide ; and the bridge hangs more than two hundred feet above the river at high tide.

Here Tix leaned, smoked his cigar, and marvelled whether he was to have an adventure. It was pretty and pleasant to see the wandering folk on Clifton Downs enjoying their summer afternoon. Tix liked to see people enjoy themselves. There were the youngsters, ascending and descending the Zigzag, seen and unseen at intervals. The Viscount fell into a reverie, and might have kept his wife waiting too long, if he had not

been suddenly aroused from it by somebody running against him.

He looked around calmly. It was a woman—a young woman dressed like a servant in her best. The collision with Lord Tixover caused her to fall on the ground, and when he raised her from it she seemed powerless. She was a little woman, with those dark eyes and eyelashes painted by scrofula, which are sometimes admired. Tix picked her up, and administered some brandy from an inseparable pocket-flask, and brought her to herself.

“O,” she cried, “why did you stop me? I want to die.”

“What a lot of people there are,” thought Tix, “who fancy they want to die! If they considered the question, they would most likely alter their minds. Now, I must find out something about this little fool.”

Tixover found the child more amenable to control after the medicine he had administered. He got her story from her. She was going to drown herself; she was tired of life. Her mistress was going to marry a gentleman who had promised to marry *her*; and—but per-

haps his misdeeds may be left to imagination. She, poor little wretch ! wanted to get out of the world before bringing another poor little wretch into it. No wonder, surely, that untaught creatures deem this the best way of escape from troubles unutterable.

Tix soon, by dint of his rare analytic faculty, discovered that this girl's name was Jane (her surname she would not tell) ; that she was half-servant, half-workwoman at Miss Wad-dams's, in Park Street, and that she had been brought into difficulty by Captain Ragget. Though pained, he was amused, for he was resolved, if she desired it, to make the Captain marry her. He got a fly on the Downs (cabs are always called flies in Bristol), and brought her to the "White Lion," and gave her in charge of a chambermaid.

By this time the Doctor and O. O. and Seroza had arrived. Tix, champion of the ladies, was, of course, recognised leader of the expedition. He decided that Captain Ragget should be left alone till the following day, and that they should enjoy their dinner in peace. Niblett used to give a good dinner ; he, or his successor, whoever he may be, doubtless does

the same now. Only, inns are spoilt by endless influx of travellers who do not know a good dinner from a bad one.

Dinner over, Seroza and Ella were left alone, for the old Doctor wanted to see the city lighted up. So they strolled round it in all directions, getting as far out of the beaten track as Old Market and Red Cross Streets, the former of which might be the finest street in England, said O. O.

"I do like an unknown city, even if only in England. There are lots of things to discover in Bristol, depend on it. When I have quite finished with South America, I have a great mind to explore England."

"The idea is admirable," said Dr Tachbrook. "There are some holes down by Penpole Point that have never been fathomed. Couldn't you descend into some of them?"

"There are no end of unexplored places in England," said O. O. "I think I shall try them for a change, and leave people to imagine I am still up the Amazon. Even the Avon might have its adventures."

"Yes; and you might pick up something fresh in the Pithay," said the old Doctor.

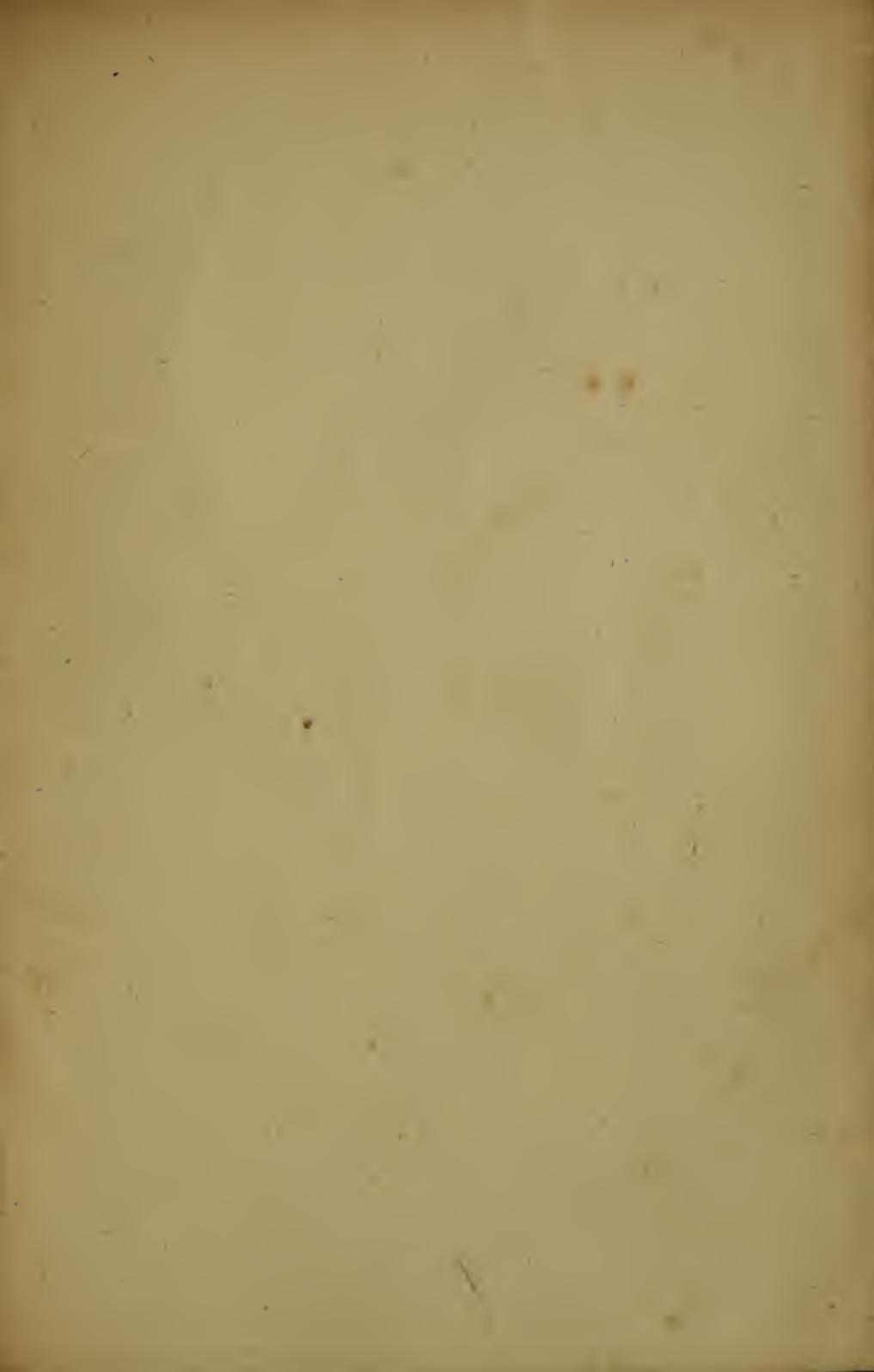
“ This is a city of legends. England has been inhabited so long, that there is not a village without a forgotten history. What is the story of ‘ Little London,’ or ‘ Talk-o’-the-Hill ? ’ ”

“ What, again,” said Tixover, “ of many old ecclesiastical villages in Cornwall and Wales ? There is scarcely a hamlet in England where there is not something unexplained. When it comes to a city like this ancient Bristol—a famous town when the Confessor Edward was King of England—the accumulation of historic record must be simply incalculable. You can scarcely put spade in ground in any new direction without upturning some ancient coin, or the fragment of some forgotten ruin.”

They were standing on Bristol Bridge as this conversation occurred. O. O. arose and spake—

“ I will explore England.”

Whereupon they went home to supper ; but the Viscount said nothing of what he had that day discovered on another bridge across the same stream.





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